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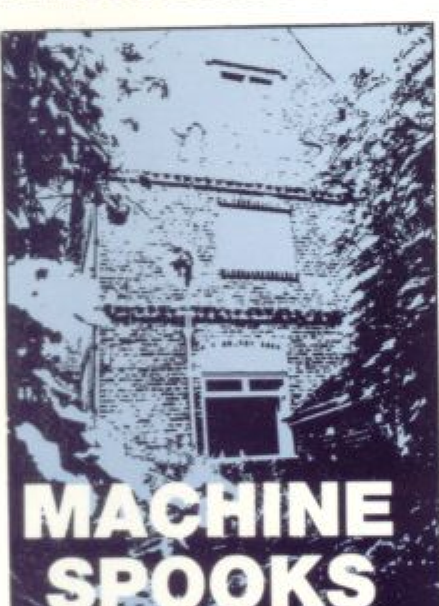
THE BIGGEST GAME EVER

From stage musical to 16-bit spectacular, we preview THE KRISTAL

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And Arcades simultaneously



Are ghosts learning to be hackers?

MSX-MUSIC

'The best sound on any computer'
Jon Bates talks MIDI and Yamaha

WIN!

A massive Swatch Clock
Expenses-paid day at PC Show
Singing Alien Hat



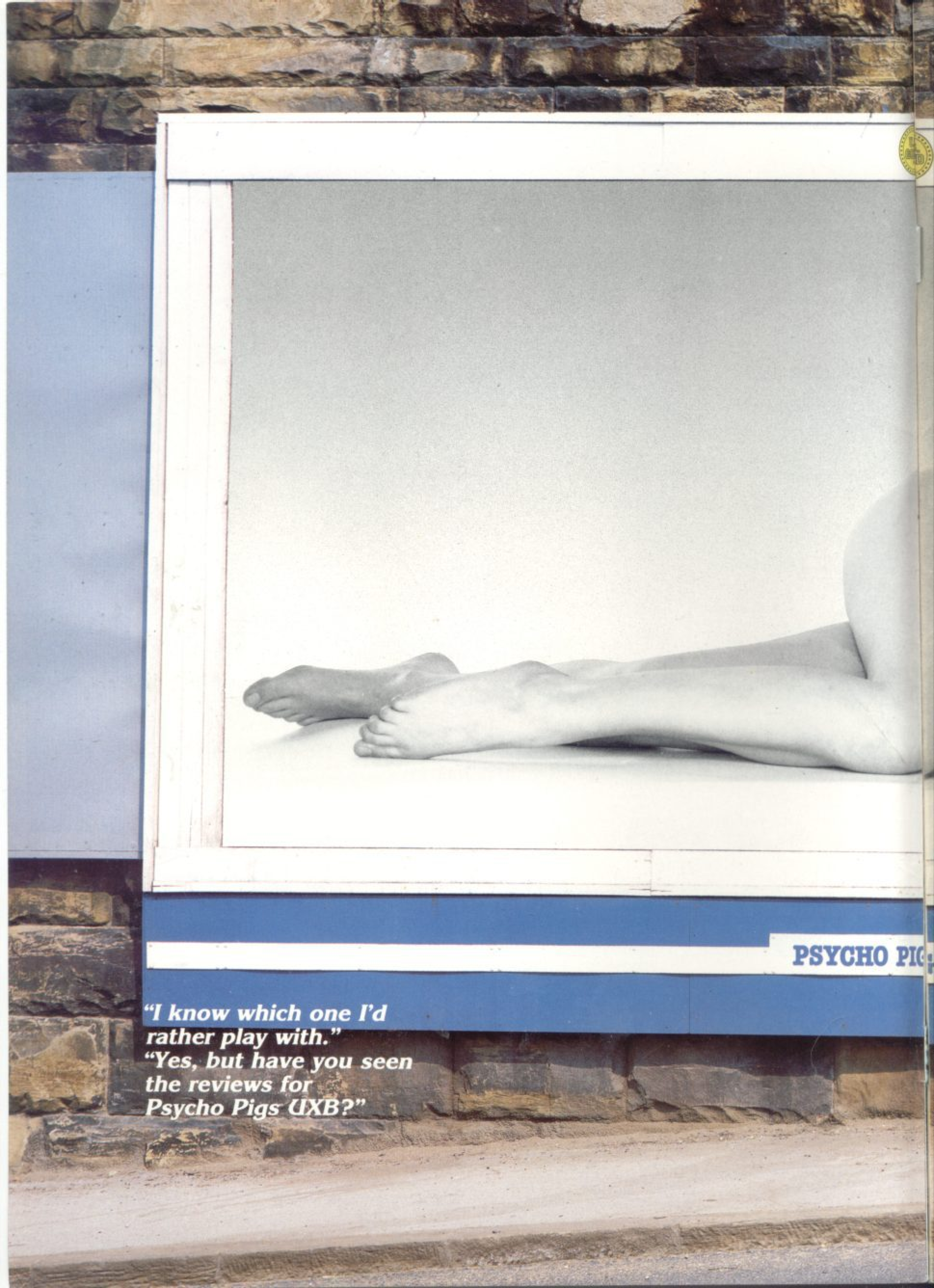
Amstrad join the fray

JOURNEY INTO THE LAIR

Laser Disc Interactive – are Microdeal mad or marvellous?

Archimedes • Amiga • Atari ST • Amstrad CPC • Commodore 64/128 • Spectrum 48/128 • MSX • Games Consoles

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PSYCHO PIG
"I know which one I'd rather play with."
"Yes, but have you seen the reviews for Psycho Pigs UXB?"

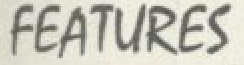

PIGS UXB



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AUGUST 1988

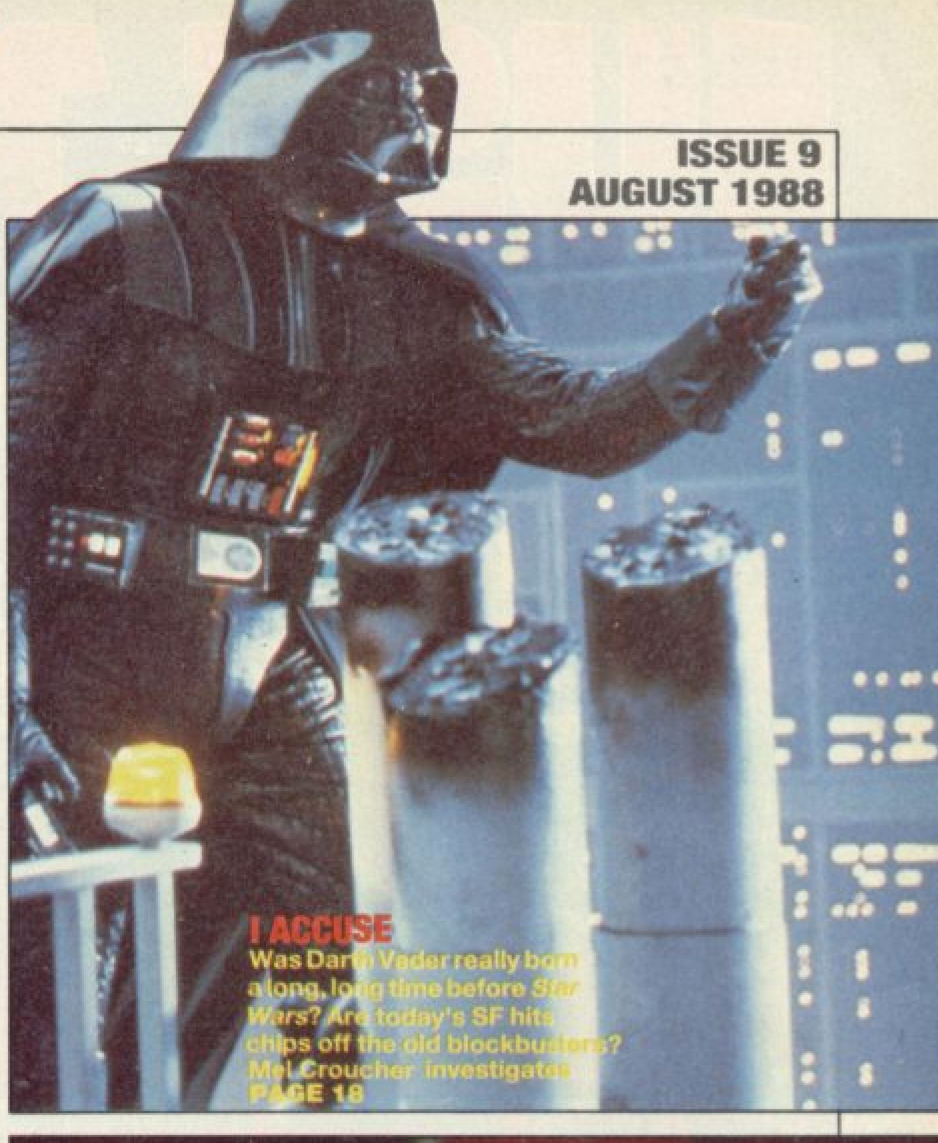
THIS ISSUE . . .

REGULARS



FEATURES

COMPETITIONS



I ACCUSE
Was Darth Vader really born a long, long time before *Star Wars*? Are today's SF hits chips off the old blockbusters? Mel Croucher investigates
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DISNEY SPELLS
Years ago, *Dragon's Lair* was a celebrated coin-op experiment. Microdeal would like you to take part again, at home. TGM explains how the laser disc game works
PAGE 74

Issue 10 of THE GAMES MACHINE goes on sale from August 18, see page 121 for details – don't miss it because it will be packed with essential features, reviews and articles – as usual!

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COVER DESIGN & ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVER FREY

£100 Amiga price cut heralds war with ST

by Stuart Wynne

The much-rumoured £100 cut in the price of the Amiga A500 finally happened in June, bringing it down to almost exactly the same price as the Atari 520STFM – £399 including VAT.

But the Amiga price does not include a £25 modulator to link it to the TV, or a games software bundle – so the ST still saves money in practice.

And though there's talk of Commodore commissioning Amiga demos from software houses, the manufacturer has no plans to match the ST's bundle, which includes £400 worth of (mostly) well-regarded software.



Commodore's Amiga A500: another bash at ST-killing

Analysis: Commodore's price cut brings the two major 16-bit games machines closer than they've ever been before.

The move should please the Amiga's designers – they planned it as a state-of-the-art games machine. But unfortunately when Commodore liked the Amiga so much they bought the company, financial problems forced them to promote the computer in the far more lucrative business market.

Ever since then, the cheaper ST has dominated the British games market – so much so that Gallup's first games chart measuring value rather volume of sales had the ST second only to the long-established Spectrum.

The launch of the Amiga A500 with keyboard, computer and disk drive in one package 18 months ago seemed designed as an ST-killer. But Commodore was determined not to undercut Amiga prices on the Continent, and kept prices relatively high.

It was afraid that cheap British Amigas would be sold by independent 'grey market' dealers abroad where recommended retail prices were higher – thus cutting into Commodore's own Continental sales.

Now, however, Commodore is taking more control of where its products end up, so it has no misgivings about the UK price cut.

Next month TGM will bring the first reports on ST and Amiga sales as the battle hots up – but the summer is a slow time for computer sales, so the price war won't get into full swing till the autumn. And by then the high price of dynamic RAM chips could have fallen, bringing about a further cut-and-thrust of price slashes . . .

Commodore has also knocked down the C64 price to £149 (including VAT, 10 sports games, tape recorder and joystick), while C64 software sales in the US leapt by a market-sweeping 42% in the first few months of this year – despite Commodore's attempts to concentrate on the Amiga in America.

Murdoch, Amstrad join for satellite space race

by Robin Hogg

By mid-1989 the UK public could have 26 TV channels – if the partnership between newspaper proprietor Rupert Murdoch and Amstrad boss Alan Sugar takes off, and other satellite plans succeed.

Computer manufacturer Amstrad will sell a 60-centimetre satellite dish for £199 including VAT – installation will be around £40 – whereas existing systems start at almost £500. And it will receive the four Sky satellite channels which Murdoch starts broadcasting early next year (see box).

But the Astra satellite, due for a November launch into space, will be able to transmit up to 16 channels – leaving room for more entrepreneurs to set up their own satellite stations.

At the launch of the partnership, Murdoch (who owns *The Sun*, the *News Of The World*, *The Times* and the *Sunday Times*) emphasised that the deal was 'bringing for the first time real choice of viewing'.

Press tycoon Robert Maxwell (*The Daily Mirror* et al), Murdoch's archrival, will also reach for the skies next year. In partnership with British Telecom and WH Smith he will offer up to six channels from the British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB) satellite, due for an August 1989 lift-off.

The Maxwell venture will rely on subscriptions and pay-for-what-you-watch charges whereas Murdoch's Sky channels will depend on advertising revenue and charge viewers nothing beyond the hardware purchase.

Murdoch already has one Sky channel, which has been losing money since its inception.

Analysis: When Rupert Murdoch, Alan Sugar and Robert Maxwell cross paths there are bound to be explosions in the satellite-crowded sky.

Sugar and Murdoch have poured scorn on Maxwell/BSB's adoption of the D–MAC (multiplexed analogue components) system – they prefer the common PAL format for TV transmissions.

D–MAC is regarded as superior to PAL – it can transmit 20.25 megabits of data per second as well as the TV picture, allowing the BSB satellite to broadcast top-quality sound with its programmes or teletext-like information services.

However, D-MAC transmissions cannot be received by PAL dishes or vice versa. A situation akin to the frustrating VHS/Betamax divide in video may develop.

The British government also jumped on the satellite bandwagon last month with a much-mocked scheme to transmit Channel 4 and BBC2 from satellite. But it would be politically difficult to make a public-financed channel such as BBC2 available only to satellite owners.

Trade And Industry Secretary Lord Young said – ironically, on BBC Radio 4 – that 'terrestrial' (ie ordinary) transmissions of the two channels would continue till half of British households had satellite dishes.

The Earth-based frequencies left vacant by the departure of BBC2 and Channel 4 to the skies would then be given to other private-enterprise TV stations.

But the bandwagon could roll in either direction before then.

On the edge: satellite TV could soon bring 24 hours a day of new films like Crocodile Dundee II

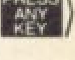


The limits of Sky

Satellite TV will bring choice to the great viewing public – but will it be a freedom of choice between sitcom reruns, insipid films and endless American football?

Rupert Murdoch's Sky satellite TV will fall into four distinct channels.

- The main Sky Channel will be 24-hours-a-day general entertainment, with 18 hours of 'improved quality' including six hours of the arts.
- Sky News will be a 24-hour news channel in a style similar to the American Cable Network News (CNN).
- Sky Movies is potentially the best channel on offer – Murdoch owns the 20th Century Fox film studio, so he can take his pick of the blockbusters.
- Sky Sports is meeting with opposition from WH Smith's ScreenSport satellite channel, who are concerned that Murdoch could build up a monopoly on major sporting events.



Making terror firmer: The thrills, mystery, beauty and travel sickness of space are on show at a new simulator recently opened in London. The **Space Adventure** draws on over 20 years' experiences of Apollo moon landings and the shuttle flights to recreate everything from blast-off through to exploration of the solar system and final touchdown, using monitors, futuristic spacecraft design and laser-disc images. This could be the UK equivalent of the Tour Of The Universe featured in TGM**008**. Fly away without ever leaving the ground thanks to 3001 Space Adventure Ltd at *64-66 Tooley Street, London SE1 2TF*.

Can stop the music: According to CD manufacturer Nimbus the medium supposed to last a lifetime may, in fact, last only **eight years**. The principal problem appears to the corrosive effect of the inks used on the disks. The inventors of CD, Sony and Philips, claim they've found no problems with their own disks and estimate less than one percent would **'self-destruct'**. But Nimbus plan to produce test results this autumn to back up their claims. At least if it's true we'll never be short of **frisbees**...

Brothers up in arms: Sony have begun production of an 8-centimetre CD for **singles** – it will presumably be cheaper than the current 12-centimetre disc. But fellow CD inventor Philips and its subsidiary record label Polygram want to retain the 12-centimetre format because, they say, many players are incapable of playing the smaller discs. After six months of squabbling a **compromise** has been reached: record companies can sell 8-centimetre CDs provided they have a ring adaptor which temporarily increases their diameter to 12 centimetres.

Arctic outfoxed: Amiga users who've upgraded the A500 memory to 1Mbyte with extra chips may find some games won't work – *Arctic Fox* and *Leaderboard*, for instance. And the fiddly work of removing the chips for every game ruins your golf swing. Now (no, we don't just have the *bad* news in TGM) **George Thompson Services** have created a product which switches the extra memory off. For selective amnesia, try the £9.99 Int-Switch from George Thompson Services, *Dippen Lodge, Dippen, Brodick, Arren, Scotland KA27 8RN*.

Turn on, tune in, throw the damn thing out: Sony's revolutionary Walkman is taking a new turn – they're cutting out the **wires**. The wireless Walkman (would we kid you?) sends radio waves from a transmitter in the tape player to a

Code Masters to simulate full-price software house?

by Barnaby Page

Budget house Code Masters are set to move into full-price games. 'We're looking at the possibility of games at £9.99,' said Operations Manager Bruce Everiss, and 'it could very well happen this autumn'.

Increased production costs and the need for advertising its foray into 16-bit will make full-price inevitable, according to the top executive.

Currently most of the software house's games sell for £1.99 on 8-bit machines.

But the firm already gets more income from just two games in its Code Masters Plus £4.99 range, launched last December, than from the 30 cheaper titles. Code Masters's 1987 turnover was £2 million and it expects to bring in £5 million this year.


Everiss: great leap forward to full-price

Everiss hinted that a full-price Code Masters range would not simply have more complex games – it would have gimmicks.

'If you put a T-shirt or something in the box you can charge more,' he said. 'We would have to justify (the move) with value.'

On the same principle, Code Masters Plus features enhanced versions of cheaper Code Masters games, rather than original titles.

Analysis: Everiss said three factors could push Code Masters into full-price: programming and manufacturing costs, advertising rates and dealer pressure.

'The cost of putting games together is increasing,' he said. 'Authorship costs are going to go up.'

And though advertising 'moves costs up markedly', 'it's something we're going to have to come round to sooner or later'. At present Code Masters advertises only in the computer trade press.

He added: 'The retailers would rather sell for £5 than for £2. The multiples [high-street chains] are always putting pressure on to raise prices.'

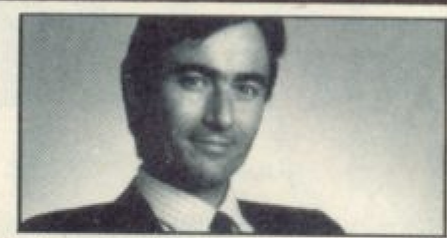
Ironically, the firm was launched in October 1986 to champion the cause of cheap games.

Two of its biggest budget rivals – Mastertronic and Firebird – are associated with full-price labels (Melbourne House and Rainbird). But the fourth great budget power, Alternative Software, has no full-price line.

Meanwhile, Code Masters has run into trouble with the original cover for its charity fund-raising game *The Race Against Time*. The original packaging used a photograph of athlete Jesse Owens without the copyright-holder's permission.

The new cover shows runner Carl Lewis. Proceeds from the £4.99 *Race Against Time* (Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and Commodore 64) go to the Sport Aid charity.

EA support the Apple corps


Electronic Arts supremo Trip Hawkins: letting Britain bite the Apple

Electronic Arts (EA) are releasing all their Apple software in the UK. And they will also start putting their PC games on 3.5'' disks as well as 5.25''.

The American software house's Apple II games include *The Bard's Tale I, II* and *III, P.H.M. Pegasus, Marble Madness, Earth Orbit Stations* and *Strike Fleet*. Apple IIgs products are slightly fewer, but include *World Tour Golf* and *Marble Madness*.

And the Apple Macintosh has just two EA programs – *The Chessmaster 2000* and *DeluxeMusic Construction Set*.

All EA's Apple releases will cost £29.95, except the Deluxe series (including *DeluxeMusic Construction Set*), which is priced at £69.95.

As for the disk move, 3.5'' disks are growing in popularity against the more traditional 5.25'' format. Most of EA's 3.5'' versions will be for sale in separate packages from the 5.25'' software.

But games by the Strategic Studies Group such as will have both formats together in the same box. That's because EA are only distributors for the Australian software producers (who wrote *Reach For The Stars*, reviewed this month) and receive the packages that way.

New use for old Commodores saves £160

C64/128 users upgrading to the Commodore Amiga or a PC-compatible should hang on to their old machines and printers – to save about £160.

A new line of £35-£45 products from Bradford-based Trilogic allows the C64/128 to act as a 64K printer buffer for an Amiga or PC. Such buffers normally cost around £200.

Trilogic's Print Link comes in two versions.

The first connects the C64/128 to the 16-bit computer via the two machines' parallel inputs, so a C64/128 printer can be used. It costs £34.99.

And the £44.99 Print Link 1B has a second interface so both a parallel and serial printer can be used – one for rough drafts, one for letter-quality printouts.

Said Graham Kelly, Joint Managing Director of Trilogic: 'The advantage with the Print Link system is that while the C64/128 is printing the Amiga or PC can be used for something else.' The older machine is under the control of the Amiga or PC, though its function keys are used for stop and start commands.

Trilogic are at *Unit 1, 253 New Works Road, Bradford BD12 0QP*.

Now Amstrad play at the 16-bit game

INSIDE TGM STORY

by Dominic Handy and Barnaby Page

Amstrad is planning a £299 16-bit games machine called the Sinclair Professional PC, for an autumn launch. It is expected to be a direct rival to the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga – though £100 less – and to be at least partly IBM PC-compatible, with a 3.5" disk drive.

Despite its name, it will not be a Spectrum.

The new machine will be bundled with a games compilation from GO!, including *Bedlam*, *Wizard Warz*, *Pitstop II* and *Trantor – The Last Stormtrooper*.

And other major games producers including Hewson have been sworn to silence about their meetings with Amstrad bosses to discuss software for the Sinclair Professional PC.

Amstrad, characteristically secretive about their plans, will make no comment. Marketing executive Anthony Sethill said 'I can't discuss anything like that' when the prospect of a new machine was mentioned.

Analysis: Amstrad's tight-lips policy makes MI6 seem like a public debating club. But despite the swirl of speculation now surrounding the Sinclair Professional PC, the likely truth has emerged through a combination of insiders' information and past Amstrad-watching.

It will almost certainly be launched at the PC Show (successor of the old *PCW* Show) in mid-September – historically, all Amstrad's computers have been released at one showtime or another, and with this year's *PC User* Show past in late June the PC Show is the next possible date.

And the fact that software for the Sinclair Professional PC is already in production suggests release cannot be far off.

Probably the biggest question mark hangs over the role a new machine will play in the already crowded marketplace – will it be a games machine, a very low-cost business machine, or even an in-between product for leisure applications like art software which require considerable processing power?

Much hangs on the monitor.

If the new computer is a 'stripped-down version of the PC1512', as *Computer Trade Weekly* and experts suggest, Amstrad won't be able to supply a monitor as well as the keyboard and CPU for £299.

And if it's to make any impact on the 16-bit games market, accustomed to ST and Amiga graphics, it will need a built-in Enhanced Graphics Adapter (EGA) rather than the Colour Graphics Adapter (CGA) of most cheap PCs – which in turn means purchasers will have to shell out at least another £300 for an expensive monitor.

So as former Amstrad consultant Guy Kewney told us, 'if it comes without a monitor at £299 it's not really that much of a games machine'.

On the other hand, Kewney points out, 'a £300 PC1512 doesn't sound that much different from the ordinary 1512' – the 1512 line starts at £399 for a model with just one disk drive and no colour adapter.

Reports that Amstrad are seeking a manufacturer to produce 3.5" disk drives may indicate that the Sinclair Professional PC will be sold as a games machine. As Kewney says, 'for the games market you need that extra resilience' – the sturdy casing of 3.5" disks, as used on the ST and Amiga, is stronger than the 5.25" floppies for Amstrad's PC1512 and PC1640.

On the other hand, IBM took the 3.5" route with their PS/2 range – successors to the PC line – heightening demand and supply for 3.5" business software.

So if the new product doesn't take off as a games machine, Amstrad could easily start selling it to business users, in a reversal of Atari's business-to-games move with the ST.

If that happened, though, it would be up against the PC1512 – which is 'sort of our overlap between the high-spec home computer and office machine', according to Sethill - and received Amstradological wisdom has it that the company do *not* release more than one product for each distinct market.

Finally, the 3.5" drive could point to a complete adoption by Amstrad of the small-format disks. The firm also opted for 3.5" drives on their most recent computer launch, the portable PPC640 (which is strictly a business machine). And the nonstandard 3" disk drive of the Spectrum +3, released last September, is widely dismissed as an attempt to clear Amstrad's unused stocks of 3" CPC drives.

The name Sinclair Professional PC sounds distinctly unlike a games machine. But it backs up reports that the computer will be marketed as a Spectrum (the original Spectrum of 1982 was invented by Sir Clive Sinclair), despite running MS-DOS rather than Spectrum games. In an unusual fit of emotional frankness last year, Amstrad boss Alan Sugar said he would not rule out the possibility of another Spectrum to follow last Septembers +3 launch.



Amstrad's Alan Sugar: September launch for cheap 16-bit games machine. Or then again, maybe not.

And vague rumours of an extraordinary bundle of *50-100* free games with the Spectrum +2 and +3 this autumn hint that Amstrad are attempting to get rid of remaining +2 and +3 stocks – at some cost, Amstrad could make the machines irresistibly attractive to punters despite the Spectrums' lacklustre image in the brave new 16-bit world.

There is also the theory that the £299 package could appear with a different name, and that Amstrad's disinformation department has simply given its product the temporary working title 'Sinclair Professional PC' – either because it roughly sums up an MS-DOS machine marketed as a Spectrum or even because it could mislead competitors.

Amstrad's plans for the Sinclair Professional PC seem slightly unambitious – the disk drive contract is apparently for 10,000 drives a month. Sources close to the project say 100,000 copies of the GO! compilation will be made, implying that by the summer of 1989 the hardware-and-software package will be revamped or even replaced with a new model.

We'll have to wait and see. As Kewney puts it, 'it can't be both PC-compatible and an Amiga-killer. There has to be some trick about it. It's a very foolish person who bets against something that Alan Sugar does'.

His company does, after all, make almost £500,000 profit a day.

Meanwhile, some reports say Amstrad has abandoned the idea of a games console for less than £50 and that its designers have left the company to take their ideas elsewhere. Other reports say shops are ordering 'hundreds of thousands' of the consoles to sell. Come in, Brentwood . . .

receiver in the headband (look at it this way: if we were making up these stories they'd be a **lot more believable**, right?). It's on sale now in Tokyo and should be in Britain soon at £140. The only **frustrating drawback** is that the headphones will pick up the nearest signal – possibly from someone standing nearby using their wireless Walkman. For Radio 2.

And here is a plug for Jon Bates though you could see it as a plug for Acorn Computers, who claim they'll be 'the first computer manufacturer to exhibit at a British Music Fair' when they take the 32-bit Archimedes to the Wembley Exhibition Hall from July 19 to 24 – an event which, by curious **synchronicity**, links up with Jon's plans to examine the musical potential of Archie in TGM**010**.

The appliance of science: Toshiba are manufacturing full-colour flat TV screens just four inches across, using liquid crystal displays (LCDs) rather than the cathode ray tubes (CRTs) of normal-sized, that is **grossly large**, domestic sets. Highly-placed sources hadn't the foggiest *why*.

They're mean, they're mad, they're fed up with klutzes knocking over delicately-stacked software: WH Smith, Boots and Woolworths – three of the biggest retail outlets for games – have given software houses an ultimatum on packaging size. They're tired of strangely-shaped boxes which don't fit on the shelves nicely the way, say, copies of *The Thorn Birds*, condoms and **light-bulbs** do. From now on, they command, software will be supplied in single- or double-cassette cases like music tapes, or (for disks) boxes the same size as CD packaging. 'Deviations' – and **where would we be** without them? – are given a few options.

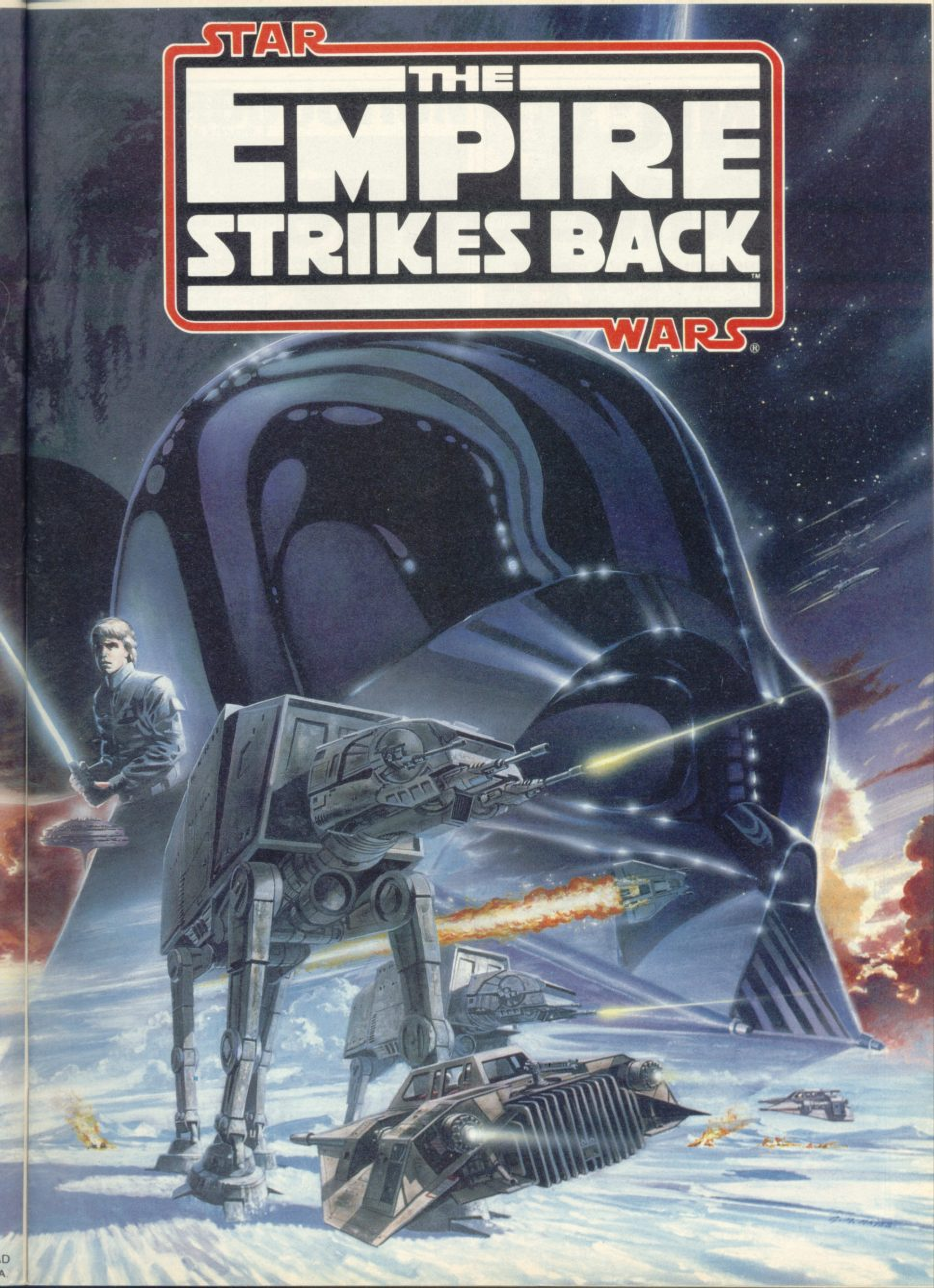
Mi/PC can beat up Your Computer any day: 'Ever been frustrated by what computer buffs call 'mess doss'?' asks the first issue's contents page. **Forget** the computer buffs, we thought, we're frustrated anyway. At least we were till we discovered *Mi/PC*, 'the magazine for first-time PC users', which isn't above a contrived link itself. *Mi/PC* (it stands for *Management In/Personal Computing*) is a commendably clear, well-constructed publication – the kind of thing you'll buy for a year with your new Amstrad PC1640, keep in a binder and refer to whenever you wonder just what it *is* that your command or file name does that's so bad. Subscriptions are free while quantities last from *Mi/PC*, Greenleaf Publishing Ltd, *10 Greville Place, London NW6 5JN*.



Comics trip: Gone are the days of Superman, Spiderman and Captain America fighting in the cause of peace, justice and the American way. The modern day comic-book hero is getting nastier – like the characters in *Third World War*, pictured above.

It's part of a new full-colour comic called *Crisis*, kicking off in September with two stories. A departure from the traditional British style, it's written by Pat Mills – creator of *2000AD* – and illustrated by *Judge Dredd* artist Carlos Ezquerra.


STAR
Brought to you by the team who produced the top-selling STAR WARS® game, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK ™ is the next stage of the unfolding drama.
This game follows the non-stop action of the movie and is a direct conversion of the famous coin-op.
The player takes the role of Luke Skywalker, piloting a snow-speeder against the huge Imperial Walkers. Darth Vader controls his forces with deadly cunning, using his Probots to search and attack the Rebel Base.
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May the Force be with you – Always!
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STAR WARS
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

GENIC ENGINEERING

Take two game formats, add a pinch of something different to each, stir well and stick both products in a hot development for a couple of months. Richard Eddy talks to Audiogenic and tastes two dishes they had prepared earlier

It's balls all the way for ASL (Audiogenic Software Limited), as the company readies itself to pounce on the 16-bit public with ***Helter Skelter*** and more balls later in the year for the Commodore 64/128 with ***Emlyn Hughes's International Soccer***.

Audiogenic, which has been around for almost more years than any other software house in the business (although its current form – ASL – is more recent), long pursued a policy of producing software for less popular games machines. However, 'less popular' meant the machines were getting older and declining rather than machines in their infancy. Last year ASL implemented a policy change and crossed over to the growing 16-bit market.

The first few products were not impressive – then *Impact* made a big dent, the September-launched *Breakout*-style game for Atari ST and Amiga, with an alarming degree of addictiveness. A year later and *Impact*'s authors, **John Dale**, **Adrian Stephens** and **Spiny Norman** delivered ***Helter Skelter***.

Helter Skelter is a massive 80-screen, addictive combination of *Breakout*, a pinball game and *Pac-Man* – taking the bouncing ball theme one step further. Each screen is built up of a combination of platforms patrolled by monsters. Its objective is simply to squish all the monsters and proceed to the next level.

Squishy-squashy

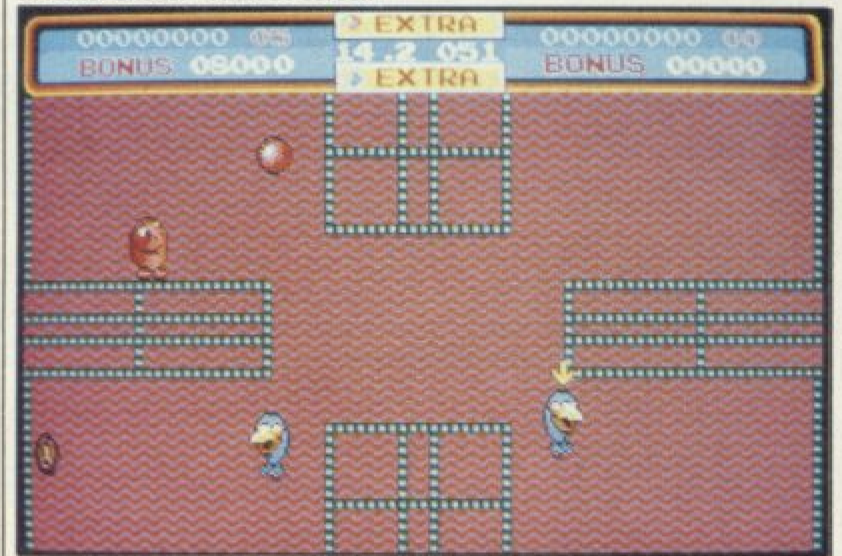
Squishing is an intricate process whereby you manoeuvre a bouncing red ball around the screen with a left, right and a jump control key, using the platforms to bounce and land on a monster. Monsters are squished in a particular order, indicated by a flashing yellow arrow above the monster's head. Squishing unmarked monsters results in them bifurcating, and then the two smaller monsters have to be squished individually.

Each screen is played against the clock, but the time limit changes every time – running out of time loses you one of five lives. As with *Impact* there is a plethora of icons to collect as they appear including extended time limit, warp to next level, freeze monsters and one gives you the ability to kill monsters in any order.

It's going to take some time to get through all the screens, by Level 17 things start getting really tricky, so be thankful the programmers have included a password entry system; every time a set of ten screens is completed a password is given, enter it next time you start a game and you can start from where you left off.

Helter Skelter comes complete with its own construction set allowing redesign of up to 48 screens from scratch, which can be saved. Nearly completed on the ST and Amiga, ASL says 8-bit conversions will be considered if 16-bit sales are successful; there's no release date yet. Additionally, ASL is currently holding meetings with a coin-op manufacturer, so you may see ***Helter Skelter*** in the arcades as soon as it's in the shops.

Controlling the red ball is pretty tricky when barriers are placed in odd places in **Helter Skelter** *– Atari ST screen*



This ST screen from* Helter Skelter *is easy enough, unless you fall off the platforms – the bluebird is the first monster to squish





Emlyn Hughes's International Soccer *looks tacky but plays very well indeed – Commodore 64 screen*

Throwing-in

Emlyn Hughes's International Soccer does look like Commodore's *International Soccer*, released yonks ago (an now on cassette from CRL), however, ASL's **Peter Calver** says: '*International Soccer* was good enough in its day, but this is a definitive and playable football simulation for the Commodore!.'

It certainly is playable, and though it doesn't excel in graphics, its control method is easy to understand. All the moves are there, sliding tackles, a variety of kicks and many more, all joystick-controlled using many combinations of directions and button pressing.

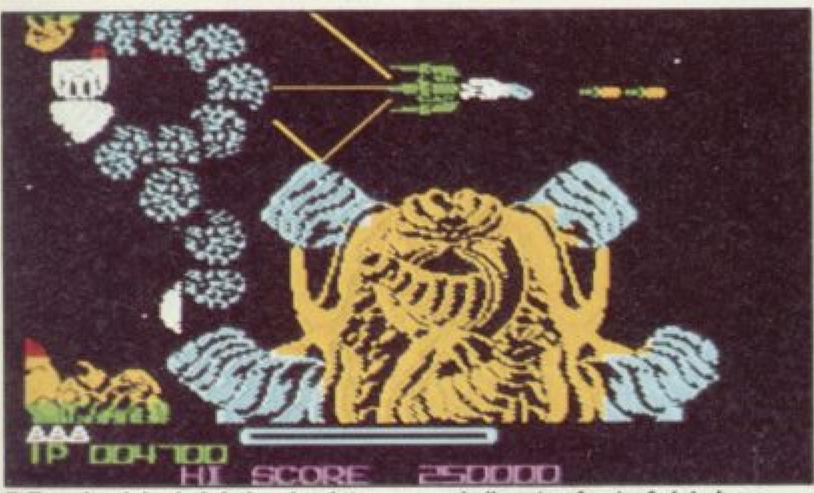
Peter is determined to make ***Emlyn Hughes's International Soccer*** the most accurate football simulation, right down to the fine points of the game: 'One aspect which is nearly always overlooked in a football game is a proper throw-in, either from the line or from the goal keeper – we've included them here.'

The game has been in development for almost a year now, and still has a way to go before it's finished, but should be out before Christmas.

Footnote

Binary Design has just been commissioned to write ASL's next big game for Christmas – all I know at the moment is that it will be a massive shoot-'em-up . . . with insects. It's the first time ASL has contracted out-of-house for a product. An interesting move.

IN PRODUCTION

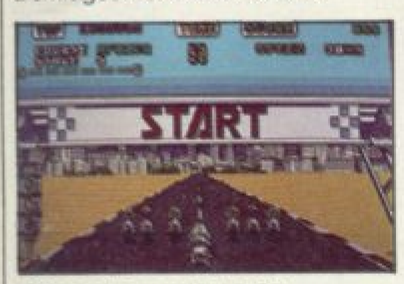


R-Type is wicked, def, the absolute max and all sorts of out-of-date hype words on the Spectrum

Our type of game

Irem's wickedest arcade master blaster ***R-Type*** hits home computers later this year from Mediagenic on the **Activision** label with conversions for Spectrum, Commodore, Amstrad and Atari ST.

But how can it be done? With a bit of determination? The detailed, highly coloured organic alien graphics aren't going to reproduce precisely, but at least Spectrum owners won't be treated to another monochrome shoot-'em-up – as you can see, there's plenty of vibrant colour. Yeah, who minds a smidgeon of colour clash?



ST speed: Super Hang-On

R-Type, if you missed it in the arcades (pretty difficult task), is in the mould of *Nemesis* and *Salamander*, you're out to destroy the sluggish Bydo empire with your space ship. Scrolling horizontally from left to right the journey takes you through eight graphically excellent levels traditionally with a gruesome monster at the end of each. We showed several pictures from the Hudson-Soft's PC Engine version in TGM**008**.

Additional fighting power is collected along the way to build up the strength of the R-9 ship. To increase battle power when in possession of the standard on-board laser, hold down the fire button allowing power to collect and then let it fly in a bolt of cosmic energy – deadly.

Be warned: ***R-Type*** is difficult, but unbeatably addictive – let's hope Activision does a good job. Meanwhile, the Mediagenic **Electric Dreams** label is finishing off ***Super Hang-On*** for the Atari ST, the motorbike racing game of speed, speed and more speed!

And even more ST speed is burning up the track in the racey shape of ***Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix*** from **Martech**. The Spectrum game was fully reviewed in TGM**004** (73%) with the Amstrad version a month later (74%). No sign of the Commodore version yet, it appears there's a programming hitch. ST ***Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix*** will cost you £24.99 in August.



Heading along the straight in Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix *on the ST from* Martech

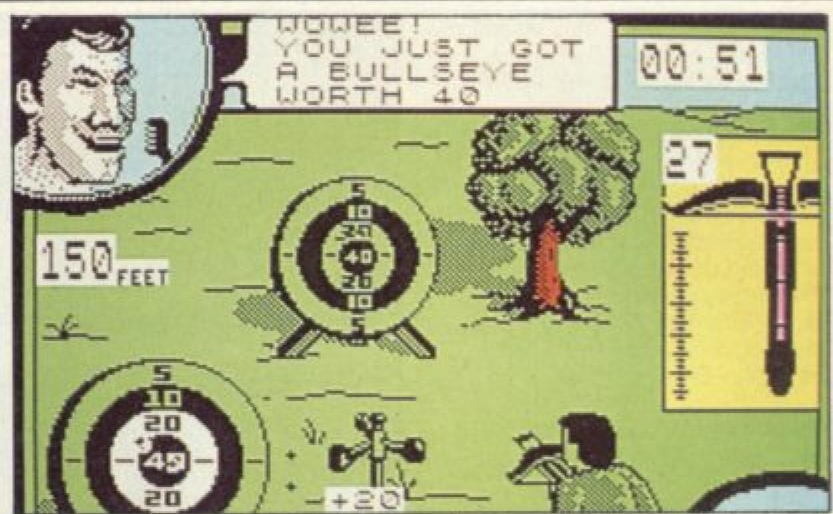
T-Wrecks

Bad puns aside, what is it with all these prehistoric monsters suddenly? The **Gremlin Graphics** programmers are latest to join the happy throng with ***T-Wrecks***, a game of destruction and devastation set in Japan and starring a vicious Tyranosaurus Rex (T-Rex, get the pun?) A group of explorers has stolen some T-Rex eggs – and you play the robbed creature as you destroy most of Japan in search of the sacred eggs.

Other monsters appear, which means fighting, and the Japanese army is hot on your claws throughout the adventure. More helpful monsters can be created once you have invaded a nuclear plant and buried collected eggs in it. It all sounds a bit *Rampage*-like, but watch out for the definitive Spectrum, Amstrad and Commodore reviews in next month's TGM.

The aptly named T-Wrecks *from Gremlin Graphics – a smashing game on the Spectrum*





Taking a rest from soccer. Gary Lineker embarks on some Super Skills *on the Spectrum*

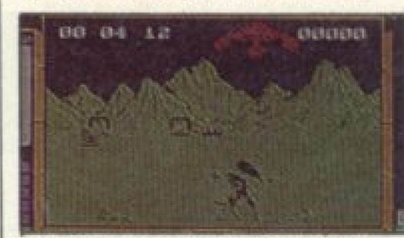
And also through Gremlin, the super striker strikes again; yes, he's back in ***Gary Lineker's Super Skills***, a program of a programme of training to improve fitness, ball control, sharpness and accuracy. You can train alone or with your team mates, choosing from three skill levels, which can be changed at the start of each section. The gym section (fitness and stamina) includes push ups, squat thrusts, weights and monkey bars. Ball juggling follows, and then the field work section, containing practice in dribbling, chipping, shooting and taking penalties. Football may never be the same again when ***Gary Lineker's Super Skills appears mid-July on Spectrum 48/128 and*** *+3, Commodore 64, Amstrad CPC and Atari ST.*

Barbarian for 8-bit

Mastertronic has signed a deal with 16-bit software house **Psygnosis** to produce and distribute 8-bit conversions of ***Barbarian*** and ***Terrapods***.

Barbarian is the arcade adventure which relies heavily on icons for control as featured in TGM**002** (Atari St, Amiga 87%). It stars Hegor the Barbarian and reveals his adventures across swampland and down deep, damp, dark dungeons in a quest to defeat Necron the evil dragon. Work completed so far reveals that Spectrum, Amstrad and Commodore ***Barbarian*** look just as good as their 16-bit predecessors, although there are some natural machine limitations.

Terrapods, which missed review, is a pleasant enough shoot-'em-up on a barren planet landscape –



The Psgynosis blaster Terrapods, *coming soon to the Spectrum*

it looked pretty and played well on the Atari ST and Amiga, though whether this conversion to 8-bit will be successful has yet to be seen. Out soon.

Top gear

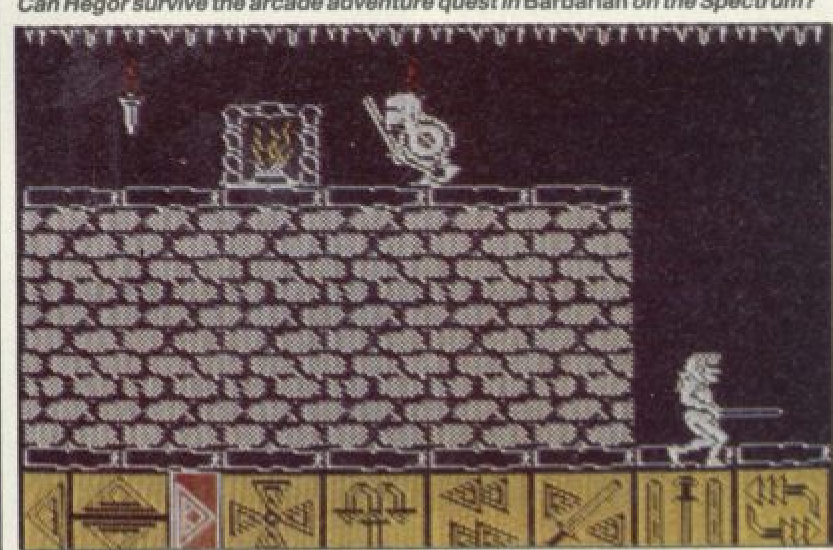
'Don't mention *Buggy Boy*,' said an **Elite** spokesperson when quizzed about ***Overlander***, a novel driving/combat game coming your way this September. So we won't.



Dangerous roads lie ahead for Overlander *from Elite – ST screen*

Overlander is set in 2025 AD on a desolated planet which was once beautiful but left barren by under-arm deodorant sprays as they slowly destroyed the ozone layer. Most inhabitants built cities

Can Hegor survive the arcade adventure quest in Barbarian *on the Spectrum?*



PRESS ANY KEY

underground where they could live safely, but other evil, deranged creatures decided to make a life above ground – the surface dwellers. The separate cities can only be accessed by overground routes. Too terrified to travel from city to city using the overland freeway system for fear of being attacked by the surface dwellers, the people underground have recruited tough drivers to carry parcels, messages and people from one city to another.

Right, enough of Elite's SF novel: as an Overlander you are to drive safely along four different freeway routes, destroying attacking surface dwellers and collecting as much cash as possible. With more cash better vehicles can be built. The freeways are displayed in a similar fashion to *Buggy Bo* . . . (oops), but include double hills, valleys and such like.

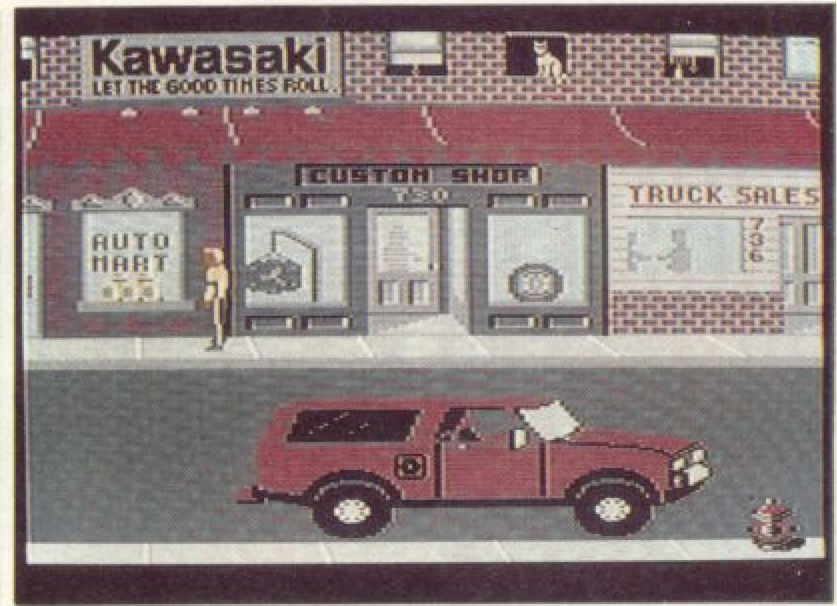
Overlander has a September release date across Commodore 64/128, Spectrum 48/128, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Amiga formats.

While Elite tries keeping drivers on the road **Epyx** pushes them off in a new product ***4x4 Off Road Racing***. Four types of terrain, varying in difficulty and including hills, valleys, swamps, mud streams and other hazards, have to be tackled in a selection of four cars. These can all be fixed up in the custom bay where you pick tyres, select how much fuel is needed, and fix up a winch if need be. Outfitting the car forms the game's strategy element as what the car is equipped with influences its abilities. No release date or price yet, but it will be available for Commodore 64/128.

Uplifted by the success of *The Great Giana Sisters* (TGM**008**, Amiga 72%, Commodore 64 82%) German software developer **Rainbow Arts**, distributed in the UK by **GO!**, is currently producing the sequel – ***Arthur And Marthur: Giana Twins In Future World*** (who dreams up these snappy titles?) It's quite different from the the first, with new ideas and a host of different graphics. More news as we get it . . .

And more for **GO!**; ***Black Tiger*** on the **Capcom** label. In this conversion from the Capcom coin-op you are the last surviving warrior from a race of thousands which has been captured and thrown into deep dungeons. The journey takes through you through five subterranean levels of eight-directional scrolling action towards your hapless colleagues. Every time one is rescued, you're awarded money, armour or weapons to help defeat the assortment of mystical kidnappers. ***Black Tiger*** is a bit similar to *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, but involves far more strategy in the attack plans.

From Black to Road: ***Tiger Road*** is another **Capcom** coin-op to Commodore 64/128 conversion. We've got an early peek, so early in fact that everything in the screen shot could be changed; but then again it might not. GO!'s **David Baxter** just isn't sure yet. But he wants to get it right because he says ***Tiger Road*** is the biggest and best martial arts adventure game ever, right?



Strategy and steering: **4x4 Off Road Racing** ***– Commodore 64***

Powerplay it again

Arcana is producing a new Amiga version of their Trivia-based game ***Powerplay – Game Of The Gods***. It comes with enhanced graphics and is said to be generally better all round. 'After the reviews of the original *Powerplay* on the Atari ST/Amiga [TGM**004** 76%], we decided to enhance it further,' says an Arcana spokesperson. 'It's obvious to us that Amiga owners were no longer satisfied with games ported over from the Atari – we wanted to produce a game specifically for the Amiga.'



The main playing screen from Arcana's second version of the triiva game **Powerplay**

The screen shot proves that ***Powerplay*** is certainly looking a lot better, and whether it is fully improved we'll find out next month in the version update.

Arcana's long-delayed ***Mars Cops*** looks like it's ready to hit the streets soon; the new date is end of August on Amiga and Atari ST.

Swiss adventure

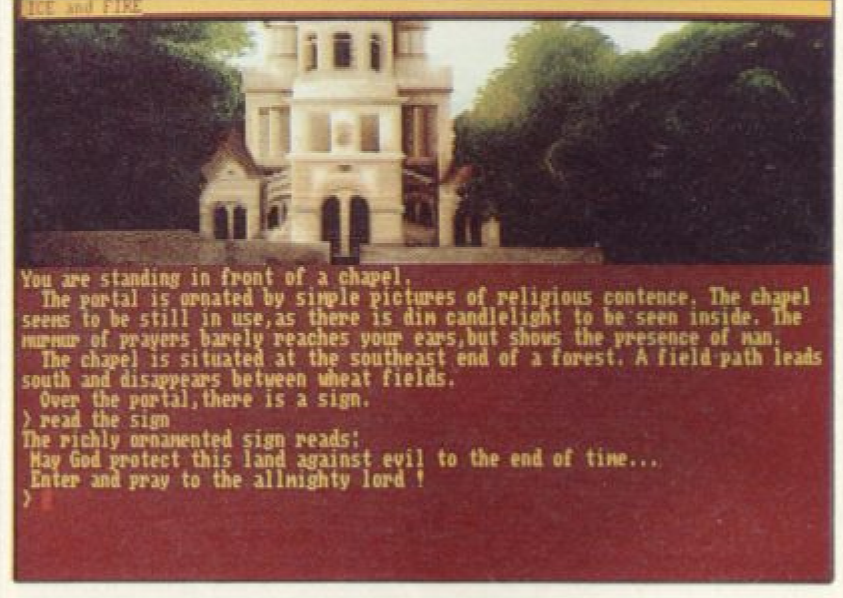
Linel, the Swiss software house which recently launched into the UK market under their own name with *Crack Starring Herbie Stone*, is ready for a second release with the text/graphics adventure ***Ice And Fire***.

The adventure is said to be complex and there are nine ways to complete it. The player assumes a character role ranging from cleric to thief, with the objective of reaching the height of the profession and finding a last resting place; for a cleric that's a bishop and a chapel. Whichever character you pick has only three days to live, so a strict time limit is imposed in which to complete the adventure. On your Atari ST, Amiga or PC in the near future.

Strategic subs

Microprose is almost finished with the strategy arcade epic ***Red Storm Rising***, based on the novel by **Tom Clancey** (author of *Hunt For Red October*.)

Red Storm Rising relates the events of the beginning of World War III. With their eyes on the Persian Gulf's oil supplies, the Russians create a diversion by invading West Germany and Iceland with conventional means.



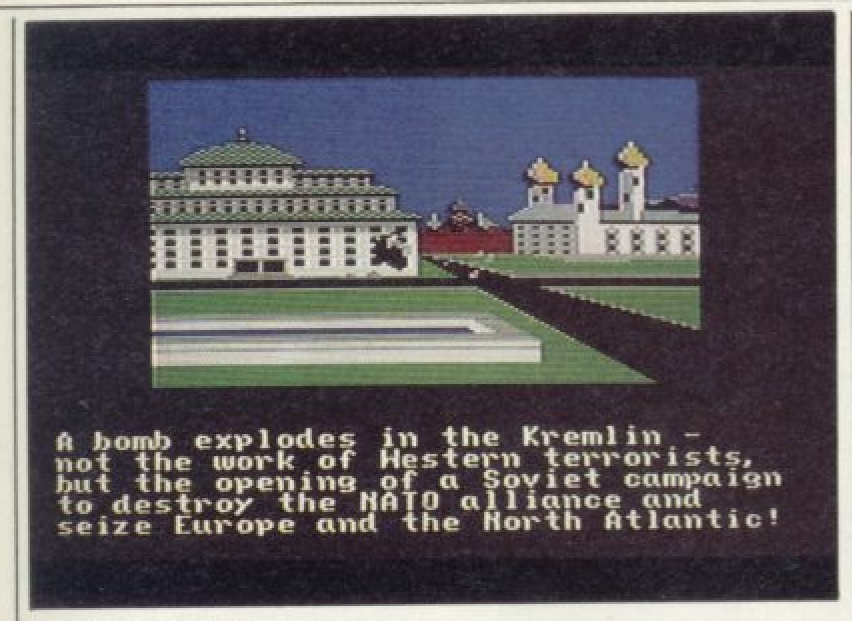
The adventure **Ice And Fire** ***from Swiss Linel on the Atari ST***



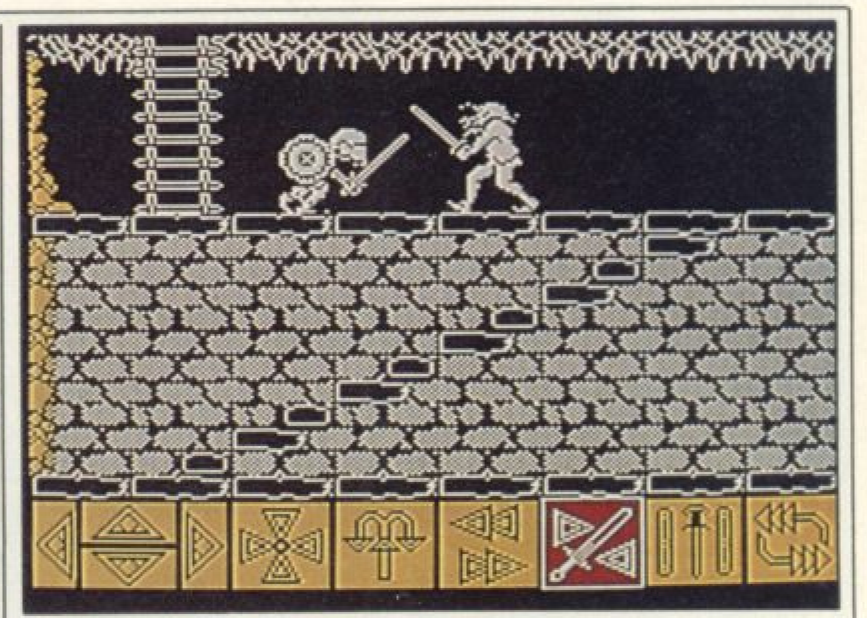
Mystical adventures soon begin in **Black Tiger** ***on the Atari ST***

The game centres on the tactical operations of a American nuclear submarine designated to locate and destroy Soviet submarines as they leave their base on the Arctic circle. Meanwhile in the Atlantic, Soviet forces are intent on destroying US convoys to Western Europe providing materiel to crush the Russian invasion.

An enormous level of war information is available to the player, such as a database of Soviet armed forces, intelligent torpedoes and hi-tech sonar equipment. There is a continual update on the war situation and, naturally, any decisions taken by the player reflects on the war's progress. ***Red Storm Rising*** is available now and looks like being Microprose's most complex game to date. There are conversions for all major formats.



Red Storm Rising – *Commodore 64*

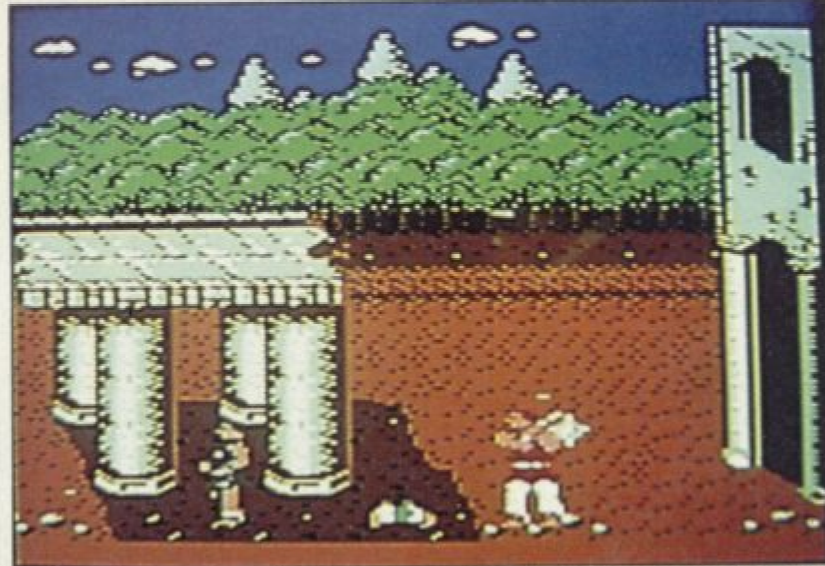


From ST and Amiga, Psygnosis's Barbarian *makes it onto the Spectrum*

Rev it up with the ST version of Overlander



Chums of Giana, Marther begins her adventure in Future World – Commodore 64 screen



A very early screen from the Capcom game Tiger Road *on the Commodore 64/128*

KRISTALISED DATA

Putting a huge stage show onto computer – incorporating every detail. An impossible task? No, just very improbable. Richard Eddy spoke to Mike Sutin, director of the project . . . THE KRISTAL

Mike Sutin, director of *The Kristal* says: 'It's the biggest game ever!' He's talking about a mammoth 16-bit space odyssey set in the Kreemar system whose planets and asteroids the player can visit to question the inhabitants and slowly reveal the story.

The Kristal was originally devised in 1976 by Mike as a musical comedy called *The Kristal Of Konos*. It never reached the stage despite Elaine Page, the cast and musicians of *Jesus Christ Superstar* recording some of the songs, which Mike stage managed. Patrick Moore, the astronomer, recorded a long narration for the show which has now been digitised and forms part of the magical opening sequences for the game.

'The show was sitting my shelf for years,' explains Mike, 'and remained there until 16-bit machines arrived, making *The Kristal* possible. The game has been created on computer as the stage show would have been – complete with scenes, character entrances and exits.'

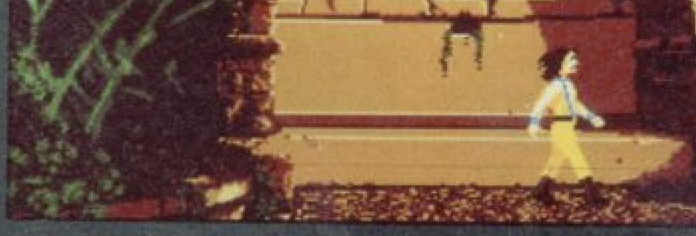
The Kristal features 60 exquisite backdrops drawn by the game's artistic director Michael Haigh and SF illustrator David Hardy, who originally created the paintings for a slide-show in the musical. The show's co-writer, Rodney Wyatt, flew back from his home in the States to help develop the game. Along with Chris Petts and Julian Edkins, Rodney created more than 75 animated sprites including 50 characters. The whole animation process uses 1,500 frames. The most accurate animation is seen in the sword fight sequences which contain 150 frames for a single character. The design for the sword fight is by Neill Glancey – himself a black belt in Katnagari, which means 'the swift sword'.

'It's difficult to relate the story without giving the game away,' says Mike, 'because the story unfolds as the game progresses. The objective is to journey around the Kreemar system visiting the many planets in search of the Kristal, the one object which can restore harmony to a chaotic universe. The game package comes with a ancient scroll relating the loss of the Kristal, giving vital clues to its whereabouts.'

Programming for *The Kristal* may seem an impossible task, but it's being handled by programming director Alex Mills, assisted by Justin (*TerroForce*, previews TGM008), Giulio Zicchi and John Edwards.

Collectively all the people involved come under the banner of Fissionchip Software and *The Kristal* has been scheduled for a launch in October on Atari ST and Amiga, and comes with a novella relating the history of Keemar system and the Kristal. It's being published by Prism Leisure Corporation at £29.95 – and well worth it too.

The space odyssey begins as your character approaches the entrance





The icy blue throne room, takes up three screens with mirror floors reflecting everything



One of the planet surfaces, drawn by David Hardy, shown by two screenshots joined together

I ACCUSE

Mel Croucher has never been against a spot of creative plagiarism, but when someone tries muscling in on his favourite plot he feels there is a case to answer

Your Royal Highnesses, androids, Vulcans, your Honour, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, in the sleazy business of entertainment, whether entertainment is a computer game, a song, a movie or whatever, there is no such thing as a new idea. All ideas and treatments of those ideas are recycled time and time again. We don't necessarily think of this as theft, or ripping off the public, it is simply the way things are.

But when an author passes off a stolen idea as original, that author should be exposed.

A couple of weeks ago, I was shooting my mouth off and inviting anyone within earshot to give me the title of a computer game, and I would provide the earlier titles from which it was ripped off, in exchange for a drop or two of Burton's finest draught ale. As a result of that challenge, I was given the titles of the computer game spin-offs from three of the most successful science fiction movies of all time, all based on 'original screenplays'.

"There is no new thing under the sun"
Old Testament: Ecclesiastes 1:9

Sometimes the writer of a computer game, a book, a song, is convinced that their work is original, having forgotten that they came across their inspiration in childhood many years ago, or watching the television half-asleep last week. However, sometimes highly professional producers of entertainment blatantly rip off plots and claim them as their own.

When Mick Jagger or George Harrison is dragged through the courts accused of stealing songs, that in itself provides great entertainment for certain folk who enjoy the spectacle of the rich and famous getting caught out. Perhaps I may be allowed to entertain you by presenting evidence that three of the biggest titles in recent movie history, all of which have had huge computer game spin-offs, were based on someone else's uncredited work. I am bound to say that I myself stole the idea for this investigation from a Leeds programmer named Ken Smith, who kindly gave me some video footage and a movie screenplay with a well-known title, suggesting that they might be one and the same plot. Thanks Ken.

"Let no one say that I have nothing new; the arrangement of the subject is new"
Pascal, 1670

Back to the forger

Does this plot sound familiar, m'Lud?

An old scientist invents a machine which can transfer matter through time. A young chap is whisked back to a town in pre-computerised America, where his actions could affect the future. Unfortunately he gets stuck in the past, and must obtain a special chemical to power the machine. In order to get back to the future he has to be in exactly the right place at the right moment. After running across a few friends and enemies our hero manages to return in the nick of time.

Back To The Future 1986? I'm afraid not.

I have just presented the outline for an episode of *Lost In Space* written by Peter Packer two decades before *Back To The Future* hit the big screen. It was titled *Return From Outer Space* and made in 1965; Billy Mumy took the Michael J Fox role. But in this version, there was no sub-plot concerning incest between the hero and his mother, Billy Mumy being only on the verge of puberty, and his mum (as played by Nancy Reagan lookalike June Lockhart) secure in her cast-iron bra and the sanctity of wedlock.

"A brand new mediocrity is thought more of than accustomed excellence"
Baltasar Gracián, 1647

Do androids steal electric sheep?

If there was suppressed sex in *Back To The Future*, there was rampant kinky sex aplenty in *Blade Runner*, this time between the hero and a lovely android, not to mention the ambiguous repulsion/attraction relationship between the hero and a murderous android renegade. *Blade Runner* was the big SF blockbuster of 1982, based on a 1968 book by the late Philip K Dick, called *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*, which was infinitely more complex and subtle than the movie.

Members of the jury, I accuse screenwriters Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, and the storyboard writers headed by Ridley Scott, of filching entire scenes, lumps of dialogue and characterisations in *Blade Runner* from the 1966 *Star Trek* episode titled *What Are Little Girls Made Of?*, written by Robert Bloch and directed by Harvey Hart. Here is my evidence, featuring parallel plots of the *Star Trek* episode, and the *Blade Runner* equivalent in italics.

Dr Roger Korby, scientific genius, creates androids almost impossible to discern from human beings, including a beautiful, frigid female and a sinister, murderous male who kills one of Captain Kirk's colleagues. Kirk investigates.

Dr Eldon Tyrell, scientific genius, creates androids impossible to discern from human beings, including a beautiful, frigid female and a sinister, murderous male who kills one of Blade Runner Deckard's colleagues. Deckard investigates.

During his investigation, Kirk is fooled by the doctor into believing that the lovely Andrea is human, and is shocked by her sexuality when he discovers she's an android.

During his investigation, Deckard is fooled by the doctor into believing that the lovely Rachael is human, and is shocked by her sexuality when he discovers she's an android.

In a vital *Star Trek* scene, Kirk gently seduces the android like this:

Kirk: Kiss me.

Andrea: No! I am not programmed for you.

Kirk: Kiss me!

They kiss, awkwardly. Then they kiss again, deep and soft. He rakes his fingers through her hair and presses her to him.



Back To The Future*: time travel to a Sixties TV script* PHOTO: CIC VIDEO

Kirk is fooled by the doctor into believing that the lovely Andrea is human, and is shocked when he discovers she's an android

Philip K Dick: dreaming of Frankenstein plot?



PHOTO: GRAFTON BOOKS



***Boy meets android:* Star Trek *1966, copied in* Blade Runner**

And how about this scene from *Blade Runner*?

Deckard: Now you kiss me.
Rachael: I can't rely on my memory.
Deckard: Say 'kiss me'.
Rachael: Kiss me.
They kiss . . . he backs off . . . she's catching on quick . . . he kisses her hard, deep, soft. He rakes his fingers through her hair and pulls her into him.

In a later scene, there is a chase sequence where Kirk falls into a pit, and clings onto the ledge by his fingertips. The android looms above, certain to let Kirk fall to his death. Kirk's face is resigned, half respectful of the perfect survival mechanisms of the android, but suddenly the machine-man reaches down and with one hand effortlessly hauls Kirk back to safety. Again, this scene is absolutely central to the plot, and the implications of what goes on in the minds of the leading characters. And once again, this scene is repeated, action for action (including camera angles) in *Blade Runner*, with the ledge of a rooftop substituted for the ledge of the pit.

Needless to say, both plots are rip-offs from the *Frankenstein* story, with the 'mad scientists' both being killed by their creations as Kirk/Deckard discover the final twist in the plot. But the similarities of the android characterisations and actions are way, way beyond the bounds of coincidence.

"It is always the latest old song that an audience applauds the most"
Homer, 840 BC

I am not a free man

The author of a computer game based on an SF film would never dream of claiming the plot to be original. Why then are the writers of the films themselves allowed to get away with it? I suppose the answer to that is the same as the answer to most abuses of power: Big Money!

Some authors are patently honest about the origins of their ideas – as in *Alien* (from a 1905 Joseph Conrad novel) and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* (from Hynek's *The UFO Experience*) – but other authors are definitely not.

The Prisoner was a 17-episode TV series in 1968, and it still has a huge cult following 20 years later. The 'creator, producer and star' was Patrick McGoohan, a very fine actor, and indeed *The Prisoner* has been an influence on my own work, which I do not deny. McGoohan was accused of ripping off the Austrian fantasist Franz Kafka (1883-1924) and strongly denied the accusation. He was correct in doing so, because *The Prisoner* was ripped off from a story by the English writer GK Chesterton (1874-1936) titled *The Man Who Was Thursday*.

One day this guy wakes up to find his identity has gone, and his captors insist on calling him Thursday. Other prisoners are also given names of the week. The key to the mystery lies in the identity of Sunday – who could be Thursday, but maybe not. Anyway, are they imprisoned? If so, by whom? Liberals, anarchists, fascists, communists, themselves? Nobody knows who is in charge, not even those in charge. Why did Number 6 resign? And whatever happened to Alexis Kanner . . . ?

I now come to my third major case.



Star Wars*: the dark side of* **The Snow Queen**

The farce be with you

One film, more than any other, was responsible for the space opera boom. It was father and mother to an entire generation of movies, kids' toys, video arcade games and home micro entertainments. When it hit the screens in 1977, most SF authors, critics and reviewers hailed it as a masterpiece, although some accused it of being nothing more than a superb hi-tech setting for clapped-out ideas ranging from *The Seven Samurai* to *Bambi*. Michael Moorcock (in *The New Statesman*), JG Ballard (in *Time Out*) and Samuel Delany (in *Cosmos*) all failed to spot the film's stolen origin. Here is my case for the prosecution against George Lucas, the 'writer and director' of *Star Wars*.

How many of you remember an old fairy tale all about a little boy who gets a splinter of an evil mirror in his eye? Perhaps you will allow me to remind you. Your Honour, ladies and gentlemen of the jury: I accuse George Lucas of not crediting the plot and characters of the entertainment known as *Star Wars* to their creator, Mr HC Andersen, deceased.

Compare *The Snow Queen*, by Hans Christian Andersen – born in Odense 1805, died in Copenhagen 1875 – with *Star Wars* (in italics):

After the splinters of an evil mirror cause misery and darkness to invade the world, the Snow Queen kidnaps and imprisons a young person named Kay in the sinister Ice Palace.

After the Evil Empire subjugates a section of the galaxy, Darth Vader kidnaps and imprisons a young person named Princess Leia in the sinister Death Star.

A plea for help from Kay gets through to an orphan girl named Gerda, by means of a coded message in the care of two inhuman messengers, a prissy talking rose bush and a cute little talking crow.

A plea for help from Leia gets through to an orphan boy named Luke Skywalker, by means of a coded message in the care of two inhuman messengers, a prissy robot called C3PO and a cute little robot called R2D2.

Gerda sets out to rescue Kay and meets a magical, wise old woman, who teaches her faith in The Mission.

Luke sets out to rescue Leia and meets a magical, wise old Jedi, who teaches him faith in The Force.

Gerda then falls in with a mercenary 'robber' girl whose companion is an intelligent, hairy reindeer.

Luke then falls in with a mercenary named Han Solo whose companion is an intelligent, hairy old Wookiee named Chewbacca.

After many adventures it is left to Gerda to save the Forces of Light from the Forces of Darkness by getting to the heart of the Ice Palace and breaching the Frozen Lake.

After many adventures it is left to Luke to save the Forces of Light from the Forces of Darkness by getting to the heart of the Death Star and breaching the reactor core.

She is successful, of course, but the Snow Queen lives to fight another day.

He is successful, of course, but Darth Vader lives to fight another day.

I accuse George Lucas of not crediting the plot and characters of Star Wars **to Mr Hans Christian Andersen.**

PHOTO: PENGUIN BOOKS



GK **Chesterton:** *original* **Prisoner** *idea*

Your Honour, ladies and gentlemen of the Jury, I lay down my briefs and I rest my case. Besides I've got to go and steal a copy of *Smart Art* from a 1959 copy of *The Topper*. It's time to nail together this month's Mercy Dash, and recycle someone else's cartoon clichés . . .

"Time is the greatest innovator"
Francis Bacon, 1625

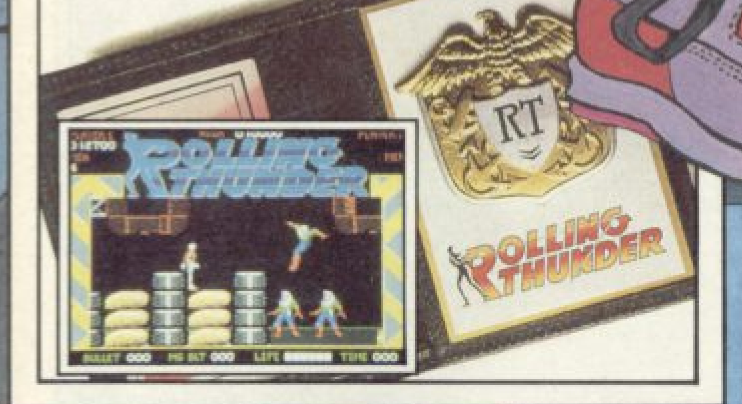
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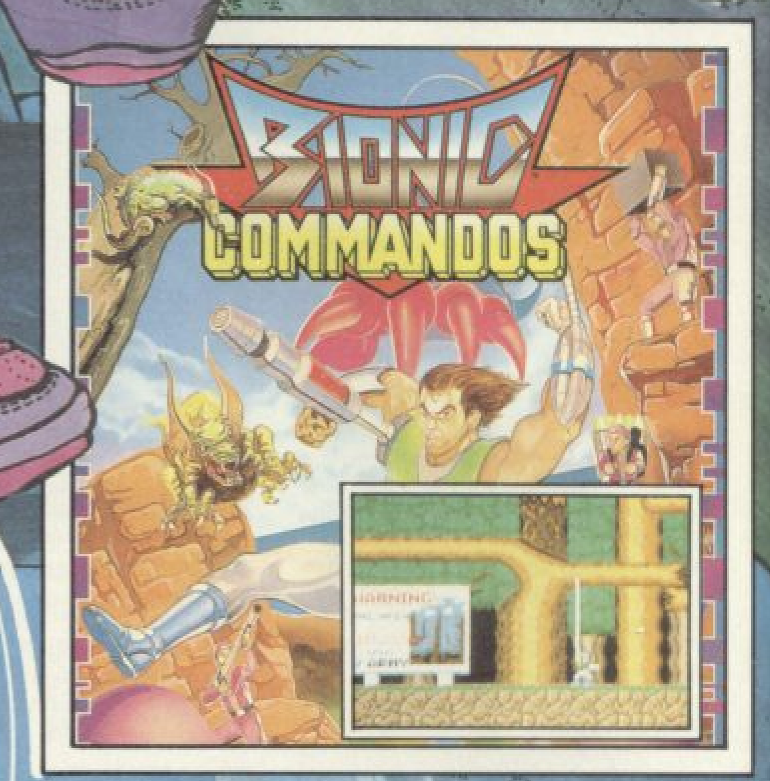
GET YOUR KICKS ON SIXTEEN BITS

Have you got what it takes t

ROLLIN THUND

undercover cop?



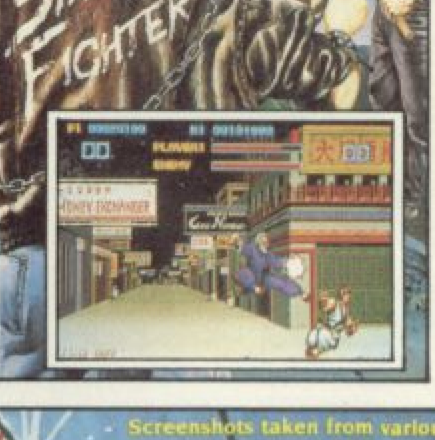


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Screenshots taken from various 16 bit versions.

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TEARS IN RAIN

In our second feature on cyberpunk Stuart Wynne and MC Wynne look onscreen – where it all began with the dazzlingly transcendent *Blade Runner*

From the moment film first came to flickering, monochrome life filmmakers have been exploiting SF as a means of showing how beautifully the new medium could be made to lie. As early as 1902 George Meliès's pantomime-like *A Trip To The Moon* was astonishing audiences with such now-staple SFX (special effects) as fast and slow motion, multiple exposure, mattes, stop motion, dissolves and fades – but little in the way of story.

When filmmakers have turned to genuine literary SF for a strong plot to accompany the effects, weakness of directorial vision has all too often ceded drama to backroom technicians. Two of HG Wells's most famous novels suffered cinematic translations – *The Invisible Man* (1933) and *War Of The Worlds* (1953) – that ended up dominated by SFX. The list of books butchered by Hollywood goes far beyond SF, of course, but special mention must go to Tobe Hooper's *Life Force* version of the brilliant *Space Vampires* by Colin Wilson, a wholly pathetic film apart from Apogee's SFX and one star, Mathilda May. Even David Lynch (*Eraserhead, Blue Velvet*) couldn't turn Frank Herbert's epic *Dune* into a good movie.

Where SF movies have succeeded they've tended to be of the comic-strip variety such as *Star Wars* etc, and antecedents like *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers* – both of which were revived in the early Eighties. George Lucas's *Star Wars* is a very influential film, however, and despite having to be released at a time when filmed SF was generally as popular as a copy of *Deus Ex Machina*, it shattered box-office records, conventional SFX technology and preconceived notions of SF films.

One director inspired by *Star Wars* was Ridley Scott. His 1979 classic *Alien* is best remembered for the genius of Swiss artist HR

PRESS ANY KEY

DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?
by Philip K Dick

The relationship between *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*, the book on which the film was based, is both complex and fascinating, for while they obviously deal with similar subject matter they have dramatically differing views on it. Scripts written as early as 1973 earned Dick's scathing contempt, aiming low, he claimed, and failing to achieve what they aimed for. In 1981, however, the Oscar-winning writer David Peoples was hired to do a rewrite which astonished Dick: 'Peoples did a *terrific* job . . . in some ways [he] improved over the book . . . the book and the screenplay form two parts of a single whole. Each reinforces the other.'

The genesis of Dick's novel lies in his research for *The Man In The High Castle*, which led him to read diaries of concentration camp guards. Appalled by what he read, Dick wondered if there could be people who were human only physiologically, while mentally wholly inhuman and devoid of empathy. The resulting novel was written at the height of the Vietnam War when Dick 'felt we had become as bad as the enemy'. To some extent *Androids* deals with how society might attempt to excise such evil from itself by using androids as symbols of the concentration camp guards. The nature of the androids' evil is most chillingly conveyed by the scene where they find a spider. In a post-apocalyptic world real animals are almost extinct, but the androids ignore that, puzzled instead by why the insect needs eight legs. Four are clinically snipped off with some nail scissors, while their retarded human friend looks on in horror. Ridley Scott, by contrast, looks on replicants as 'supermen who couldn't fly', biotechnological triumphs doomed to tragedy by a commercially imposed four-year lifespan. When Rachael recalls one of her

Blade Runner

Blade Runner

Cyberpunk is the lived-in realism of Ridley Scott's Alien . . .

Giger's Alien, Watcher and derelict spacecraft; yet the Nostromo itself was no less impressive a creation. Despite the slick look of Ron Cobb's preproduction interior designs, Scott insisted that in their execution they mimic the dirtied down, lived-in realism of *Star Wars*'s rebel resistance. Similarly, costume ideas produced by Moebius emphasised pockets, ribbing and patches so that the crew itself seemed a part of the Nostromo. In embryo form the result contained much of what has become cinematic cyberpunk; jury rigged hi-tech, gloomy, *film noir*-ish lighting and all-powerful corporations.

The development of this 'look' in Scott's *Blade Runner* proved so disorientatingly close to what the subgenre's inventor – William Gibson – had visualised that he had to stop watching after 30 minutes. This closeness was due in part, no doubt, to a drawing on similarly pessimistic sources for a near-future vision. At the same time, however, cyberpunk writers are much more aware of film than was ever the case with conventional SF writers. John Shirley, for example, has described future life as being open to 'editing', like a movie, by advanced technology and mind-altering drugs. Occasionally even the structure of cyberpunk writing seems affected: Gibson's latest novel, *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, interweaves so many different interconnected subplots via brief, multicultural – and 'fast-edited' – sequences as to suggest *Hill Street Blues* interspliced with MTV on fast-forward. Both Gibson and Shirley now have several scripts going through Hollywood, with Shirley involved in writing for the US *Max Headroom* series.

Another factor in this unique relationship between cyberpunk film and print is the stress laid by both on the environment of their stories. *Blade Runner* is saturated by corporate advertising – symbolised best by the all-pervasive blimp – and has everything from plugs to doorkeys to the street-crossing signs redesigned for realism and 'look'. Similarly, Gibson's *Neuromancer* seems to label almost any significant object with a corporate tag (Chubb keys and Braun drones), while the environment is quite vividly evoked: *'. . . in an arcade . . . Under bright ghosts burning through a blue haze of cigarette smoke, holograms of Wizard's Castle, Tank War Europa, the New York skyline'* (p15). With

both films and books, therefore, the backdrop to almost any scene should, at best, contribute to the overall content of the story. The cinematic master of this process is, of course, Ridley Scott and the best example his 1982 masterpiece.

Blade Runner

A thoughtful and difficult film based on SF novelist Philip K Dick's book *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* (see side columns), *Blade Runner* suffered from being released when most SF was of the arcade-action variety; and from a disastrous marketing campaign. Sneak previews in Denver and Dallas were advertised by posters carrying the wildly inappropriate legend: HARRISON FORD IN HIS BIGGEST ADVENTURE YET. FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ALIEN. Ford fans expecting another *Star Wars* were inevitably disappointed and poor audience reactions led to changes such as a hastily written narration – its trite awfulness fully reflected in Ford's bored tones. A downbeat ending, ambiguously concluding when the elevator doors shut on Deckard (Ford) and Rachael, was modified by a further scene showing the two riding off into the sunset with Ford glumly informing the viewer that Rachael, quite uniquely for a replicant, or artificial human, had no four-year termination date. Such vandalism justly failed to bring in blockbuster success and talk of a *Blade Runner II* was met with grim laughter.

While genre critics raved over the film from the beginning (Alan Jones called it 'the first true science fiction film' in *Cinefantastique* magazine), mainstream critics found it confusing. The *Financial Times*, for example, criticised the prolonged death sequence of Zhora, apparently ignorant of how pivotal this scene is to both the film and original novel. From the opening sequence onward, *Blade Runner* strays from simplistic good guys/bad guys into complex and provocative territory. At the start we find a Blade Runner testing for unfeeling replicants with a Voight-Kampff which measures lack of empathy in response to set questions. Logically the replicant, Leon, should coolly answer the questions and only shoot the tester if he tries to make an arrest. In fact the 'unfeeling' and simple-minded replicant becomes increasingly *agitated* by the questions. When the icily cool Blade Runner asks Leon about a mother he can never have had, Leon panics and shoots him.

The next scene introduces Rick Deckard, a retired Blade Runner who is obviously going to be involved in tracking down and killing Leon. Even if the audience dislikes Leon and wants to see vengeance done, the movie seeks to further undermine such simplistic logic. Deckard is brought back to his former work by threats, his distaste for the job is obvious, while his fat, white, cigar-smoking boss is an archetype of racism and sexism. But just in case we miss the point the moronic voice-over intones Bryant was 'the kinda cop used to call black men niggers'.

As Bryant shows Deckard a video of the 'skin-jobs' he's to 'retire' it's apparent a young guy all in white with a light sabre in hand isn't about to appear labelled hero. Deckard's a weary, 'little' man called to do some very dirty work. Initially, however, the replicants' alleged slaughter of 23 people and the menace in the eyes of the warrior-king Batty serve to suggest that perhaps the ends will justify the bloody means.

The awfulness of such means becomes apparent in the killing of Zhora, a beautiful replicant whose death sequence is shown in shocking slow motion like a scene from Kurosawa's classic film *Seven Samurai*. As in the novel, each death in *Blade Runner* is unpleasant and fully expresses the awfulness of real, rather than glamourised, violence.

A refusal to glamourise death is hardly the limit of *Blade Runner*'s ambition, though. A more forceful and primal theme is expressed by the sheer power of Rutger Hauer's Batty. Our first view of him is his fist, nails blackened as if in death, with only sheer will power keeping him alive. Towards the end of the film when death slowly becomes irresistible, he drives a spike through his hand for a few moments more of life. By stark contrast to Deckard, Batty is a forceful, driven character of astonishing self-assurance. His confrontation with Tyrell – the replicants' creator – is a set piece of the film presented in a vast, candle-lit chamber. Like the embodiment of human pride, Roy Batty (the Mad King) confronts God straightforwardly: 'I want more life, fucker'.

Batty's murder of Tyrell is one of the most visually muted and yet unsettling in *Blade Runner*. The Creator's self-evident genius is emphasised by Batty's initial uncertainty, yet at the same time his callousness in abandoning his children to slavery and a four-year life span is no less apparent. Once Batty has killed his father, his humanity, almost like a Oedipal case-study, is allowed to blossom. Just as Deckard's lover Rachael provides him with the sheer determination to ultimately escape his work, so Pris brings out Batty's humaneness. Even before the murder, Batty's desperation to see Tyrell is expressed by saying 'Pris hasn't got long to live. I can't allow that'. When Pris is retired by Deckard, Batty kisses her open mouth, appearing to steal her tongue, then tastes her blood in an act as shocking and absolute as New York junkies passing needles carrying drops of blood to their girlfriends.

Batty's pursuit of Deckard begins with an animal-like howling, but closes with him saving Deckard from falling to his death. This final act of empathy to the lesser man illustrates Batty's superiority over Deckard in humanity, as well as mere physical strength.

Life span

The reason for the replicants' four-year lifespan is that 'after a few years they might develop their own emotional responses . . . So they [Tyrell] built in a fail-safe device . . . [A] four year life span'. The need for such a device is shown by Batty, of course, but to make Rachael their most convincing replicant, Tyrell Corp provide her with artificial memories. As with *Neuromancer*'s ROM-construct Dixie, Max Headroom and later Robocop, the memories serve to transform machines into humans. The importance of memories is shown by how Leon tried to retrieve his photos from the apartment he is forced to abandon. That memories are all we are is an integral part of *Blade Runner*, and form the metaphor through which the tragedy of death is expressed by Batty:

'I've seen things you people wouldn't believe . . .

'Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion . . .

'I watched c-beams glitter in the dark near Tanhauser Gate . . .

'All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain.'

That Batty's tragedy is our own is made clear by Gaff who leaves Rachael alive for Deckard, but still reminds him of the four-year life span: 'It's too bad she won't live, but then again who does?'.

The origami unicorn Gaff leaves at Deckard's apartment refers to a cut scene where Deckard dreams of a unicorn, a fantasy Gaff could know about only if it were implanted. The single ray of hope in the film is the ultimate humanity of Batty. His saving of Deckard both reasserts traditional human values and illustrates his own humanity, which if freed of its termination date might live so much longer, and brighter than our brief span. This concept of humans being as upgradeable as hardware is, of course, a key cyberpunk theme.

Design

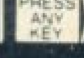
What *Blade Runner* is most known for, however, is that 'look'. Design possibilities were in fact a key element in why Scott decided to do the film, and upon its completion he remarked 'in *Blade Runner* I would go as far as to say the design is the statement'. To help with this design work Ridley Scott called in Syd Meade, an artist who first worked for Ford's Advanced Vehicle Studio in Michigan state. By 1970 he had his own design company, which contributed to numerous mass transit projects and even the Concorde project. His original brief was to design the futuristic cars featured in *Blade Runner*, most especially the flying spinners, but his street scene backgrounds to these designs came to influence the broader look of the film. The incredibly dense layering effect, with the retrofitting of almost everything to keep things running, was Scott's idea, though, as was saturation advertising, with a TDK neon as the coldly commercial backdrop for Batty's death.

Blade Runner's costume design has things to say. The punk element of this cyberpunk story is

implanted memories for Deckard she speaks of a spider with an 'orange body, green legs'. It worked all summer building a nest until the 'egg hatched and hundreds of baby spiders came out and they ate her'. As Dick's own novel subtly admits the notion of Nature as an anthropomorphic, cuddlesome pet is a false one. Whereas his novel closes with Deckard devoted to an artificial toad, *Blade Runner* embraces the cause of the replicants from the beginning. They, like us, are creatures abandoned in a wilderness of meaninglessness with short moments of life. Their rage against that harshness echoes our own, yet by virtue of their artificial nature they could indeed grab more life from their corporate creator. Scott's endorsement of their attempt makes his film truly cyberpunk beyond even its enormously powerful visual design.

In other matters, however, book and novel move in perfect unison. Both recognise the irony of attempting to stop a perceived evil by cold-blooded murder. A central, entropic theme of *Androids* is that 'you will be required to do evil wherever you go. It is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity . . . It is the ultimate shadow; the defeat of creation' (p135). Deckard's 'retirement' of androids is even more shocking in the novel, with Luba Luft's killing a lot more powerful than the prolonged, parallel execution of Zhora in the movie. That Deckard recognises the horror of his acts, but continues in them, places him in a position eerily akin to the Nazi guards whose diaries Dick read.

At the same time it is clear a two-hour movie cannot hope to encompass all the ideas contained in a 183-page novel. While *Blade Runner* has produced the most realistic cinematic depiction of the future yet seen, Dick's novel focuses on a more dream-like, surrealistic approach. The novel begins with a marital dispute over the settings of Penfields which can evoke hundreds of emotions, yet the main point seems to be the



clash between husband and wife rather than the impact of the technology. Another element unique to the novel is Mercerism, a religion by which people share their emotions, which is perhaps all the more valuable for its being false. A supremely disturbing novel, *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* lingers in the mind long after it has been read.

Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep? is available for £2.75 in Grafton paperback.

COMING SOON

Aliens III may or may not be strictly cyberpunk, but the script is being written by arch-cyberpunk William Gibson. *Black Glass* is a cheap, £1.5 million Mickery Films production due to begin filming this November under director Charlie Atlas. The script is by cyberpunk John Shirley. *Cyberforce* is a US TV pilot which aims to be a cross between *Miami Vice* and *Robocop*. The director is Russell Mulcahey (*Highlander*), so there's a chance it might be good. *Macrochip* is a Gibson/ Shirley script but there's no news on it yet. *Neuromancer* will be a Cabana Bay Production based on Gibson's award-winning novel. *New Rose Hotel* (director: Kathryn Bigelow) comes from a Gibson short story.

PRODUCT

Blade Runner is now available on Warner Home Video sell-through for £14.95, while the *Max Headroom* series can be rented in two-episode volumes distributed by RCA/Columbia.

COMPUTER GAMES

While there's no game of the film *Blade Runner*, a game based on the Vangelis soundtrack was made by CRL. It featured a Blade Runner tracking down replidroids in his skimmer, then shooting them in a crowded city scene. A dire game only available on 8-bit machines, it was hardly a massive hit. Quicksilva's *Max Headroom* was much better (85% in CRASH), and featured Edison Carter trying to recover Max from a 211-floor building under the guidance of Theora Jones.

Cyberpunk is Max Headroom, the computer-generated talking head . . .

self-evident in the costumes of Pris, numerous participants in the crowd scenes, and the B-52-like parody of Rachael. Why punk fits is its anarchic, *Devolutionary* view of society as inherently corrupt and oppressive which, for LA in 2019, seems an obvious truth. In *Blade Runner*, a strangely luminescent and beautiful punk vision of tomorrow, today's short-term commercial values are criticised more chillingly than in any of punk's increasingly dated music.

Max Headroom

The idea of a computer-generated talking head originated with George Stone, of the Ram Jam Corporation software house, and he subsequently worked as a scriptwriter on the Channel 4 film. Initially the concept was for Max to host a music awards program for Chrysalis Records. Max was too good for such a limited forum, however, and *Max Headroom: 20 Minutes Into The Future* was born as a Channel 4 film. The look quite clearly owed a great deal to *Blade Runner*, with long raincoats, dark lighting, punk villains and – of course – retrofitted technology predominant. And appropriately enough the film's Network 23 TV reporter hero – Edison Carter – and pirate TV station housed in a pink bus seem to have influenced *Network 7* in turn.

The story of the reporter's own network continuing to run blipverts that compressed 30-second ads into three seconds and exploded unemployed or old or disabled people was nothing special. The use of hacking, however, was good and quite suggestive of Gibson's cyberspace idea. In one scene, for instance, Carter's controller tries to save him from the villains by manipulating the security systems of an office block, an effort opposed by another hacker leading to an excellent computer game contest with real people instead of sprites.

Another cyberpunk idea was Max himself, a computer-generated personality based on Carter's memories which raised questions about artificial intelligence and life. If all your memories were perfectly transcribed onto a machine, would it be you?

The film made a sufficiently big impact on American TV executives for them to commission a six-episode series at a cost of well over $1 million per episode. Episode 1 was a slightly toned-down version of the Channel 4 film, developing it into a series format. Some nice cyberpunk lines retain their power: 'hands are worth more than cameras' remarks a villain as they take Carter to the body bank to be cut up for spares. In addition snippets of advertising and futuristic news stories broaden the depiction of a run-down world, much as happens in *Robocop*. An interesting change to the original is an emphasis on Victorian-age typewriter keyboards suggestive of *Brazil*'s attitude to technology.

Episode 2, *Rakers*, features rakeboarding, a *Rollerball*-type sport developed by the networks despite its violence. Carter gets involved through his controller, played by Amanda Pays, whose brother becomes a contestant.

Body Banks, returns to more firmly cyberpunk territory with the servants of an ageing woman seeking a donor for organs needed to keep her alive until she can be immortalised by the Max Headroom AI process.

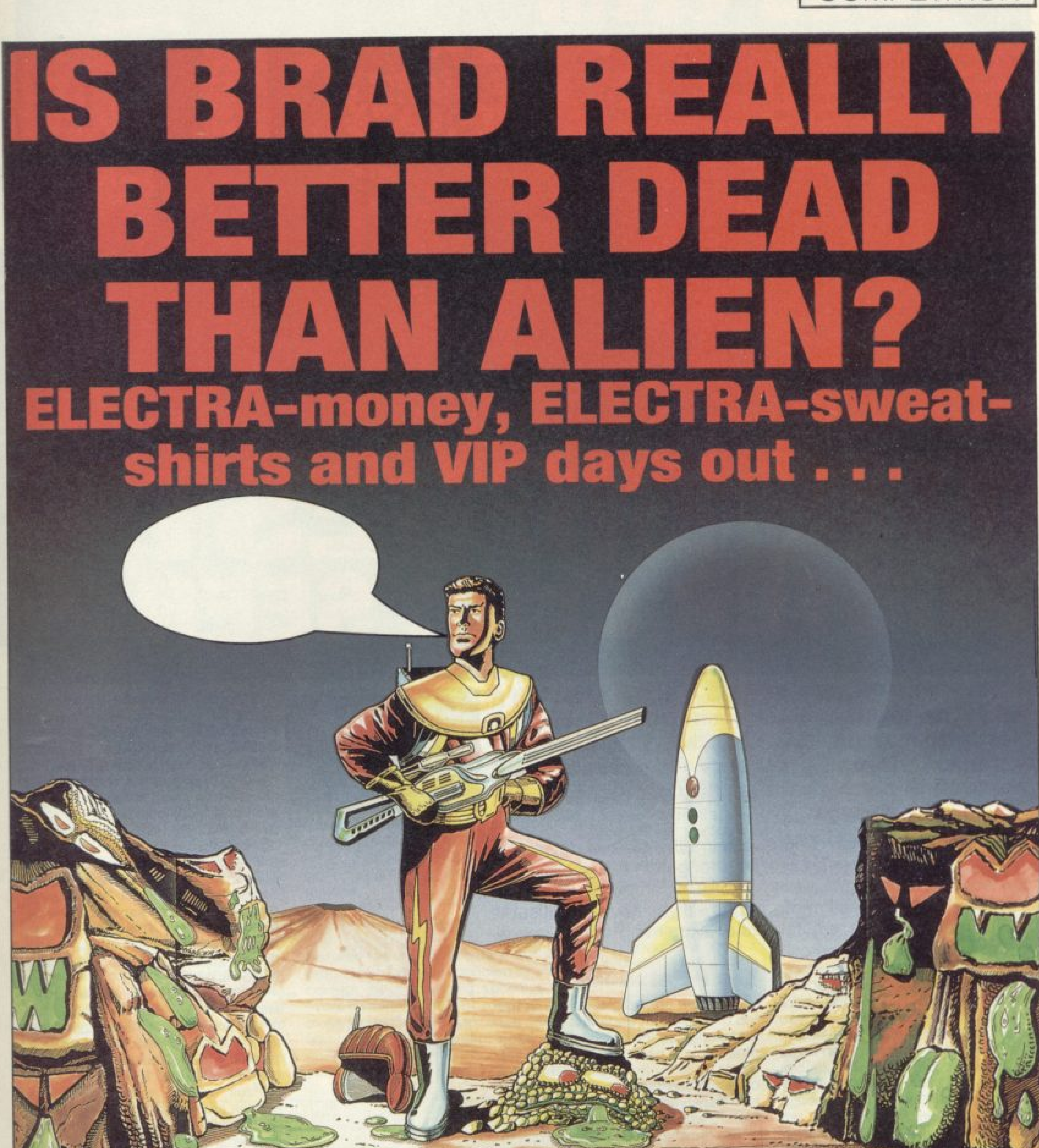
A donor is caught when coming into the city to sell her blood (many people strapped for cash do this in America now), and is swiftly taken to a special hospital. Carter is naturally called in to investigate and a nice homage to *Blade Runner* is made when someone asks him 'to be kind to animals' as payment for a favour.

The idea of a permanent underclass of people is brought up by this episode, but is unfortunately never fully explored. In the Sixties the poor were 'rediscovered' in America and a War On Poverty launched which fell afoul of Vietnam costs. Since then this kind of underclass has become accepted again; one famous American journalist has even argued music sounds better in New York City because of its 'extremes of wealth and poverty'. The current Thatcherite revolution has, of course, itself been accused of perpetuating and worsening the condition of a British underclass.

Episode 4 – *Security Systems* – was quite obviously inspired by cyberpunk writing with highpower corporate manoeuvres embroiling Carter in a fight with Security System Inc's artificially intelligent computer A-7. To clear himself of a falsified credit fraud charge – a crime 'worse than murder' – Carter calls on Max to break the ICE of SSI's AI. This ICE – or Intrusion Countermeasures Equipment – is famous from Gibson's books but works well enough here in an enjoyable story which weakens towards the end.

The final two episodes are considered to be best. *War* has a corrupt TV programmer conspiring with urban terrorists to stage 'events', while *The Blanks* concerns a politician manipulating the media and simultaneously attempting to destroy blanks – people not hooked into the media networks. Unfortunately, despite some interesting ideas, excellent presentation and a nice line in TV self-parody, the series has now been cancelled due to high costs and lack of immediate success.

Next month Stuart Wynne will examine cyberpunk in print, and reply to Mel 'why do I look like a French paratrooper?' Croucher's ill-founded criticisms of *Blade Runner* on page 18 of this issue. He'll also look at *Robocop*, a new cyberpunk classic about to appear on video.



Those new guys at Electra have a treat in store for potential superheroes and galaxy rangers with their first release *Better Dead Than Alien* starring the one and only Brad Zoom – hero of nothing in particular.

Better Dead Than Alien is a tongue-in-cheek, addictive shoot-'em-up with titillating B-movie heroics as Brad has a go at defeating swooping aliens in 25 zones. Take a look in the reviews for full details on how *Better Dead Than Alien* plays.

Brad Zoom will be appearing on the Electra stand at the Personal Computer Show (PC Show, Earls Court, 16-18 September) and all prize winners will get a chance to meet him (if he's not too busy defending the planet that is . . .). There are 11 tickets for a VIP day out at the show courtesy of Electra. In addition to an expenses-paid day out, the first-prize winner receives £100 cash to spend on all the glorious software available *and* wins a *Better Dead Than Alien* sweatshirt. 10 runners-up each get a *Better Dead Than Alien* sweat-shirt which they can pick up on their day out.

What do you do? Simple; put words into Brad's mouth and tell us what he's saying in that speech bubble as he stands there contemplating another day of heroics. Best speech bubble wins!

Answers on a postcard or back of a sealed space suit to

BETTER DEAD THAN ALIEN COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*

Don't forget to write your name and address either! Entries must reach TGM HQ by August 18 and follow the competition rules as detailed in the masthead.

THE BIGGEST POSTER EVER SEEN

DELUXE PHOTOLAB – £69.95 – is the latest in a string of graphic packages from Electronic Arts. Developed by Digital Creations, it combines three programs to create and manipulate near-photo quality pictures. Robin Candy investigates

The name 'Photolab' brings to mind the stink of developer and fixative, the snap of lens changes in the enlarger. In fact, this suite of programs' title is a misnomer; it *will* let you fiddle with digitised photographs – if you have a digitiser – but its real functions are threefold: a painting utility, image processor and poster maker.

As such, it is designed to complement the existing range of Deluxe graphics products and act as a print-driver for end results. Its usefulness to you depends on what input and output peripherals you have; but even if you don't own a digitiser, fine results can be achieved from artworks already existing in *DeluxePaint*, although without a colour printer you are not going to see the full benefits.

Let's take a whistle-stop tour through the three programs.

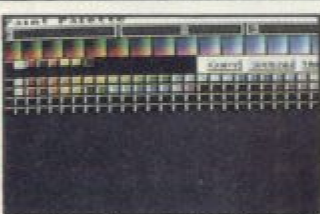
Photolab runs on any Amiga, but requires at least 1Mbyte RAM. The program caters for display in low resolution, high resolution, hold and modify (HAM) and extra-halfbrite – all interlaced or not. As usual, these define the display area and number of colours available in the palette. Extra-Halfbrite is a neat trick which effectively doubles the on-screen colour-range to 64 in low res and 32 in high. The low res palette consists of two banks of 32 colours, first bank user-defined. The second bank repeats the colours of the first but displayed at half their brightness. For details on HAM and Interlace, see the panel.

The Paint utility

In the work area, the tools are at the top of the screen under the menu bar and alongside the palette; it's a good arrangement because your eyes only have to look in one direction for clicking. Also the cursor's coordinates are displayed – a small but useful feature which many utilities neglect.

The drawing tools will be familiar to any art utility users: DOTTED and CONTINUOUS FREEHAND lines, STRAIGHT LINE – solid lines from and to specified points using click-drag-release techniques, CURVE – similarly defines arcs between two specified points.

That this is primarily a graphics modifying program is reflected in the flexibility of the AIRBRUSH. Usual is that it allows large areas to be painted quickly with a random pixel effect, the longer the left mouse button is depressed the denser the effect becomes. Less so is that the distance from the cursor which the airbrush affects can be defined by pressing the right mouse button and dragging the mouse until the desired area has been achieved; a useful feature allowing for fine airbrushing of small areas.


Paint's Colour Palette in HAM

"Extra-Halfbrite is a neat trick which effectively doubles the colour-range"

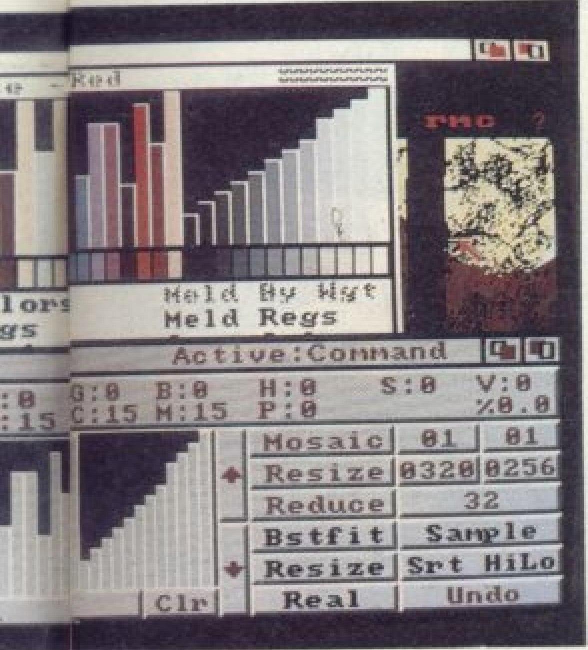
Ludlow Castle ready to print, 110 pages on a 11x10 grid ,

Shapes are catered for in three forms: RECTANGLE, OVAL (you can make circles with it) and POLYGON. In familiar Deluxe style, the split icons create outlines or filled shapes. Under the heading of polygons, freeform shapes can also be constructed and filled. If start and finish points miss by a few pixels, a straight line is automatically added between the two, thus avoiding the irritation of diving into magnification to dot in the missing, enclosing pixels – it's another thoughtful touch. Shape tools use the click–drag-release techniques to construct the shape which is not fixed to the screen until the left mouse button is released.

The FILL tool fills enclosed areas with either the currently selected foreground or background colour; any fill in progress can be aborted by pressing the spacebar. Through FILL CONTROL there are four options: SOLID (default option), TRACE EDGES, BRUSH PATTERN and GRADIENT. SOLID speaks for itself, TRACE EDGES adds a one-pixel outline around the boundary of the area being filled. BRUSH PATTERN fills the area with a pattern made up of the brush in use. GRADIENT fills the area with a range of colours fading into each other, ranges being preselected in the palette. *Photolab* sets graduation of the gradient through the familiar dither slider, and the gradient direction can be altered.

The BRUSH SELECTOR, depicted as a pair of scissors, uses click-drag-release to box and pick up rectangular areas of the screen. Clicking the icon's lower half lets you corral an irregular shape for use as a brush.

The program also has MAGNIFY and ZOOM and TEXT. In text-mode the cursor is replaced by a rectangle showing the maximum size of the letters within the font selected from the library of typefaces provided on the program disk.



Colour analysis: checking the population by colour of red-using pixels

Above the tool menu the Title Bar accesses a further five menus: PROJECT, BRUSHES, MODES, OPTIONS and FONTS. In PROJECT are all the load/save options and the PALETTE REQUESTER. Colours can be adjusted either in RGB (Red, Green, Blue) or HSV (Hue, Saturation, Value) or by clicking on the sixteen-square array which displays all 4096 possible colours. Colour spreads can be defined for use in gradient fills. Because they are designated by start and end markers, reversing the markers reverses the spread direction.

BRUSHES contains all the brush manipulation commands, including load/save options and several preset shapes. Manipulation commands include brush rotation through any angle, rescaling to any size and recall last brush – all virtually standard on any art utility.

Through MODES the way paint is laid down on the page can be altered. The paint modes include BLEND and SHADE, useful when producing smooth shading. Shading is an interesting function: within a defined boundary, graduations of a single colour can be painted in bands which run from full colour saturation to none at all. This and GRADIENT FILL are powerful commands, particularly useful when shading complex shapes or creating effects which would normally take hours to achieve.

Under OPTIONS the fill and magnify modes can be altered.

Posters

The second program, Posters, is a resizing layout system and print-driver which can be used to print your masterpieces as postage stamps or, over many sheets of paper, as billboards up to 100 square feet!

Basically, what it does is import a ready-made picture into the work area, which is made up of a grid, each rectangle representing one printer page. The original artwork can then be resized, keeping its aspect ratio (though this can be turned off for distortion), to cover as many pages as you want. The poster grid is easily defined for each page dimension to suit either your intended design or printer paper.

Through PRINT REQUESTER, the resulting image is printed in vertical or horizontal columns off the grid. Single pages within a large poster can be selected for printing in case any error occurs. It can be set for continuous paper feed or single sheet feed; either way the result can be pasted together. During printing, the SMOOTH function does antialiasing, while WHITE BACKGROUND tells the printer not to print colour register zero, so objects drawn on, say, a red background, can be vignetted if the red is set to the zero register.

Colours

The final program is for processing pictures. As its name suggests, the program is primarily concerned with colours, be it changing specifics or even switching display modes. It's most powerful function is to allow artists to import several pictures and combine elements from each while matching colour harmonies from different palettes to an optimum.

"One useful aspect lets you convert a picture from one display mode to another"

SEPARATE

Colour printing, professionally, is done by using four standard ink colours: cyan, magenta, yellow and black. By overlaying these, full-colour effects can be achieved, although proper pictures require very accurate and sophisticated techniques to achieve a high-quality result. Nevertheless, by using the separation function in *Photolab* set to those four colours, you could print out four images for each colour register using black ink on your printer. These four black-and-white images would then be used by a printer to overlay the four colours in register to provide an acceptable end result in full-colour. A fiddly process, but one which could be employed in adding simple colour pictures to DTP projects.

Once a picture has been loaded, the COLOUR COMMAND SCREEN appears. This is a fairly complex menu containing many gadgets.

The COLOUR STATISTICS DISPLAY shows information about the components of any colour in the picture. It gives values for RGB, HSV and yellow, cyan and magenta levels. As well as the components of a colour, the program also gives a readout on the percentage of total pixels that are that colour. Just beneath the statistics display is the REGISTER GRAPH showing RGB and HSV components or pixel population in bar graph form.

Flags are used to change the amount of red, green, or blue in a colour. This can affect the entire palette or specific colours.

Pulling down the Colour menu provides access to a host of options. SEPARATE is a submenu to produce colour separations of your picture in red, green, yellow, cyan, magenta and black; selecting red, for instance, turns the entire picture red, and the blue and green values are set to zero (won't print) while the red values remain untouched.

MATCH PALETTE matches the picture to the palette of another picture. The picture uses the palette from another picture while trying to preserve the appearance of the original as much as possible.

MAKE B/W converts the current picture into a black-and-white image, while NEGATIVE instantly switches polarity to create a reverse-video, or negative, image.

One useful aspect of Colours is that it lets you convert a picture from one display mode to another, and it's easily achieved. The VIEW MODES menu contains the option SET TO. Selecting this calls up a list of possible resolutions for your picture. Once a display mode has been selected, Colours converts to the new format attempting to keep it as close to the original as possible. The size of the colour palette may increase or decrease depending on the format selected. Should the palette decrease, the computer estimates which colours to sacrifice by performing a pixel count and recolouring areas with the nearest corresponding colour.

Conclusion

The Paint program is good enough to sell as a stand-alone art utility. While it isn't the most powerful drawing program on the Amiga, it has all the major tools, includes powerful block and fill commands and incorporates several improvements over *DeluxePaint II* in some details. Posters is only useful if you possess a high quality colour ink printer which the program is capable of exploiting to the full.

Colours is an extremely useful program for modifying existing pictures, particularly when combining elements from several pictures where numerous colour changes may have to be made or in enhancing digitised images. *Photolab* is, at a reasonable price, not only a satisfying addition to a hobby, but also a useful tool in the mechanics of low-cost desk top publishing if you're moving into low resolution colour production.

BITS, HAMS AND INTERLACE

The Amiga supports 32 colour registers from a universe of 4,096 possible colours defined by the number of available bit-planes. In low resolution, with five bit-planes, 32 colours are possible on screen simultaneously, halved, of course, in high resolution with four bit-planes.

On each bit-plane there can only be two possible colours – pixel switched on or off – add another bit-plane and there can be four colours. Each additional bit-plane raises the available colours by the power of 2. Limitations are imposed by the cost of providing bit-planes and the enormous increase of memory required per plane.

HAM uses 16 colours but displays all 4,096 by addressing the first four bit-planes (2x2x2x2), and then using the fifth and sixth to determine whether the register colour or a modified colour should be displayed. What it does is take the preceding pixel's RGB value and substitute a new value for one of the RGB components; thus it takes three pixels to change from black to white (black: 0,0,0: 0,0,15: 0,15,15: white: 15,15,15), a process called 'ramping'. Clearly, this makes fine detail work in HAM hard to achieve.

Interlace doubles the vertical dimension of pixels, the advantage being an increase in vertical resolution without sacrificing the number of colours available in the selected mode. But in Interlace mode two screen scans are required, painting each alternate horizontal row of pixels. This creates a flickery effect which can be distressing after a few minutes.

"It has all the major tools, includes powerful commands and incorporates improvements over DeluxePaint II"

SPECTRUM 48K/128

20

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LEAD REVIEW

45 ■ WHERE TIME STOOD STILL

Denton Design use their expertise learned on the successful *Great Escape* and come up with the ultimate 'movie' game; *Where Time stood Still*. Set in a land that time forgot you are pitted against prehistoric man and beast in a desperate attempt to return your marooned party to civilisation. This one's going to be a monster.



REVIEWS

36 ■ SENTINEL

The addictive strategy game transports itself onto the Amiga this month. Complete with a suitably eerie sound track, *Sentinel* will have you absorbed . . . for hours

55 ■ DARK SIDE

It may be the slowest of all the versions but *Dark Side* on the Commodore 64/128 remains one of the best games of the year so far. And wait till you hear the music.

61 ■ THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Help the rebel alliance as they battle against the Empire in Domark's *Star Wars* sequel. Destroy the Probots, trip the AT-ATs and dodge asteroids in this vector graphic epic.

30 ■ HAWKEYE

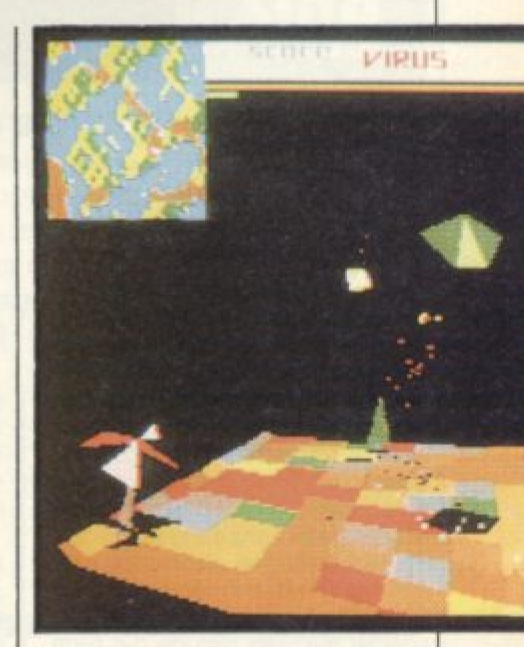
Control a Synthetic Life Form and fight your way through hordes of aliens in an effort to save the world from the deadly Skryskis. Super-smooth scrolling and incredible sound FX – the trade marks of Thalamus – combine with great gameplay to provide hours of finger bustin' blasting.

56 ■ BARBARIAN II

Journey to the depths of Drax's dungeons hacking and slaying vile creatures as you go . . . until you meet the dread sorcerer face to face. Take the role of either the wig-wielding Barbarian or provocative Mariana in your quest to free the land of Drax's menace.

31 ■ VIRUS

The Archimedes version (titled *Zarch*) blew our minds (which explains a lot) and we raised our eyebrows when news reached us of an Atari ST version. Curse us for having doubts! *Virus* is incredible, hardly discernible from the BBC original – you won't believe your eyes.



NEXT MONTH . . .

More games than you can wave a joystick at . . . we'll have *Road Blasters, Fire And Forget, Marscops, Bard's Tale III*, more of *The Empire Strikes Back* and the 16-bit versions of *Street Fighter*.



VERSION UPDATE

Return of Zarch

VIRUS
Firebird

ATARI ST: £19.95

BETTER known, perhaps, under its Archimedes title *Zarch*, this ST Firebird conversion of the Superior Software game has been done by its author **David Braben**, co-author of the classic space combat/trading game *Elite*. As Superior Software hold copyright to *Zarch*, Firebird were forced to use another, hence *Virus*.

An alien force has invaded your region spreading in its wake a red virus which chokes the life out of the very heart of the land. To combat the threat, a hoverplane is made available to patrol the region, armed with missiles and a laser cannon and controlled, by you, via the keyboard or mouse (the former being slightly easier to master the intricate ship controls.)

Two further spacecraft have been added to the alien forces infesting the ST version; an Attractor uses a tractor beam to pull the hoverplane into the ground if it gets too close and a mystery spacecraft appears later on in the game armed with a lethal new weapons system. Otherwise the gameplay is similar to *Zarch* (reviewed TGM**002** 81%), mildly repetitive but the execution makes it stand out from other games. While the ST's 16-bit processor can't match the speed of a RISC machine, the scrolling is still rapid. Sound is limited but effective and the ST's colour range is extensively used. The impact of *Virus* comes not so much from its impressive graphics and technical prowess but from the closeness with which the ST version replicates the original 32-bit RISC game.



Zarch by any other name



The ST's large colour palette is extensively used in Virus

ATARI ST: OVERALL 83%

BRICKBAT

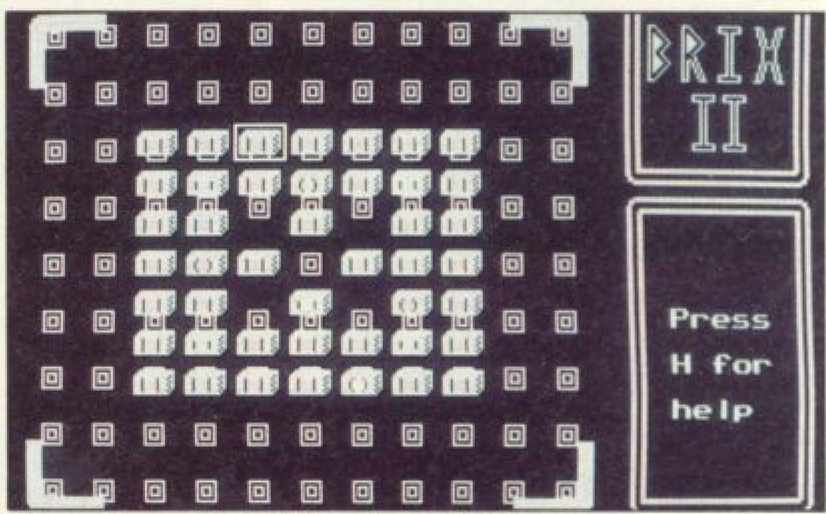
BRIX II
PC Leisure/Prism

We reported in TGM**008** (page 7) the Prism Leisure Corporation's resurgence, and following last month's *Arac* conversion, this game is the second in a series of five PC Leisure budget games for 1988. It has a lot in common with one of the oldest and most basic types of computer game, the *Breakout* genre. Programmed by **Richard L Wright**, it is his first game.

Breakout games enjoyed something of a revival last year with the superb *Arkanoid.Brix II* adds to the formula by having four bats, each on one side of the screen, rather than the usual one. Parallel bats, (top and bottom, left and right) move in tandem so not too many keys are needed. Other special features include big bats, trick bats, speed bats.

In theory *Brix II* sounds interesting, but the execution is poor. When the centre of the screen is filled with bricks there is very little time to react to rebounds and with such unimaginative designs and use of colour there isn't much incentive to persist.

The screen editor is a lot easier to use than actually playing the game, but unfortunately there's no save option so the point is a little questionable. Using the editor to review the game's 20 screens shows the programmer's own lack of inspiration for this unattractive and overly difficult *Breakout* clone.



A clone to break out of – dull graphics and difficult gameplay

PC Diskette: £9.99
Apart from the fact that *Brix II* autoboots, it's difficult to find much worth praising in this program. Sound FX are dire, while the graphics are poorly designed and make unimaginative use of a non-EGA palette. 'User-defined keys' in fact merely offer a choice between shift, ESC and CTRL keys. Avoid.
OVERALL 17%

"An unattractive and overly difficult Breakout **clone"**

BRAINLESS FUN

HAWKEYE
Thalamus

Boys Without Brains sound more like a pop band than programmers (and behaved like one at last year's PCW Show when Thalamus signed them up.) They're a four-man Dutch team

Many centuries ago a prosperous and thriving civilisation was raided by the Skryksis, a vicious band of space nomads who built huge industrial radiation plants on their planet. These eventually poisoned the atmosphere and destroyed most life. Those that did survive retreated underground and swore revenge on the nomads. They built a synthetic warrior to fight for their cause – half human, half machine – it was capable of withstanding the crippling conditions above ground and sufficiently armed to tackle the heavily guarded sectors around the radiation plants.

It was decided that computers would not react fast enough to the type of opponent the Synthetic Life Form (SLF) would have to deal with, it had to be guided by remote control, a task entrusted to a veteran soldier called Hawkeye – the fight for justice begins.

Power surge

The game takes place over a horizontally parallax-scrolling landscape, with you in control of the SLF. The various environments in which you engage the enemy include cities, icy plains, dusty deserts and ultimately the Skryksis central base. The enemies encountered attack in droves and take the form of flying creatures, giant robots and prehistoric animals. In an attempt to counter their destructive efforts the warrior is armed with an impressive array of weapons: a hand gun, machine gun, laser rifle and – most devastating of all – a rocket launcher. All weapons (apart from the hand gun) have limited ammunition, although reloads can be performed by picking up the correct icon.

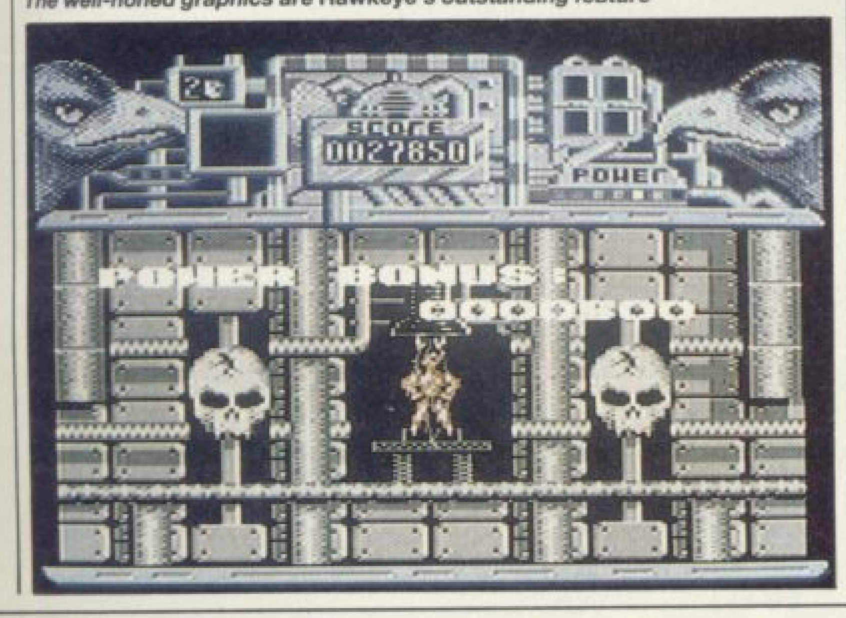


Horizontal parallax scrolling

As well as beating off the incessant enemy attacks, four puzzle pieces have to be collected to complete the current level. Your inventory of icons is indicated on the panel above the play area. Once all four pieces are collected, you are whisked to the bonus screen where a power, bullet, laser and rocket bonus are awarded. These are displayed as a subtotal before the SLF is sent to deal with the next of the 12 levels.

In development for the better part of a year, *Hawkeye*'s large, well-animated graphics bear the polish marks of dedication and are the game's most outstanding feature.

The well-honed graphics are Hawkeye*'s outstanding feature*



COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £12.99

Graphically and aurally very professional, it falls short of Thalamus's previous high standard in gameplay, which is run-of-the-mill. Control of the warrior is at times finicky as pixel perfect accuracy is needed to reach some of the platforms. Hawkeye **is a good version of a tried and tested game format.**

OVERALL 80%

OTHER VERSIONS

An Amiga version is under consideration.

"Large, well-animated graphics bear the polish marks of dedication"




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GREMLIN
NIGHT RAIDER

POOR CHOICE

SHACKLED
US GOLD

This US Gold version of a 1986 **Data East** arcade game was programmed by **Choice Software**, who tend to specialise in conversions. Their previous games include *World Games*, *California Games* and *Kung Fu Master*.

For reasons that are less than obvious, all your friends have been kidnapped and imprisoned in the cells of a huge underground complex. Naturally you set out to rescue them and in the dead of night enter the complex. Viewed from a similar perspective to *Gauntlet* a second player can join in to help explore the dungeons and rescue imprisoned friends.

A friend in need
Masses of stupid but heavily armed guards pack the corridors and dungeons of this strange place. Cell doors can be opened by blasting them with a weapon and if a friend is inside he will be freed to follow after you. Usefully your friends are all armed with special weapons – perhaps that's why they were imprisoned – which you may use once the friend is rescued. Once you have freed as many friends as you think are on a level you can leave it via the exit – usually behind a special locked door.

There are over 100 levels necessitating a sensible multiload system on cassette versions. To see them all fully use is made of various objects left behind by zapped enemy guards and big monster enemies. The objects include 'speed-ups', 'shot 'speeds' and 'extra defence'.



These chains aren't as good as the rest – Commodore 64

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.99

The ST game suffers from atrocious graphics, jerkily-moving enemies and very mediocre sound FX and tunes. Disappointing.

OVERALL 43%

AMSTRAD
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

Initial impressions are poor, the scrolling is laborious and character movement jerky. However, once a 'Speed-Up' has been gained the game becomes a lot faster and, with some quite good sound FX, fairly enjoyable. Nevertheless by comparison with Gauntlet **the game is distinctly sub-par and offers little in the way of originality.**

OVERALL 52%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £8.99
Diskette: £12.99

The Spectrum has minimal sound FX and graphics that are both monochrome and poorly detailed. This, combined with unoriginal and repetitive gameplay, makes Shackled **a very unattractive prospect.**

OVERALL 43%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

The Commodore game comes complete with some very nice background music and smooth scrolling. Graphics are bland however and provide little incentive to fight on to the higher levels.

OVERALL 47%

OTHER VERSIONS

An MSX version is planned.

"Unoriginal and repetitive playability, a very unattractive game"

VERSION UPDATE

It plays to improve your word power

SCRABBLE DE LUXE
Leisure Genius

Atari ST: £19.95
Amiga: £19.95

FOLLOWING last month's De Luxe version of *Monopoly* on the Commodore 64 come 16-bit conversions of *Scrabble De Luxe*, originally a monochromatic 128K Spectrum game.

The new Amiga game is in fact Leisure Genius's first for that machine and features an attempt to improve on the rather flat ST presentation with subtle shading on the plastic-looking tiles and more attractive board colours. While not in any way striking these changes are for the better, although the ST's cardboard-looking wooden tile finish and simplistic board in no way impair playability.

Options include setting a timer for moves, forcing the computer to make its move instantly and even having the computer display what words it's thinking about using.

Gameplay is identical on both machines: up to four players can take part, three of which can be computer-controlled, each having a tray with seven letters. In turn players make up words from their tiles (yes, this is the bit for people who don't know *Scrabble*), fitting them onto the board by using a letter already there. For instance, you might put GA and ES around M to make GAMES.

The words all score points according to the point values of the letters, and any special board squares which are covered. At any time the computer can be asked to juggle the tiles displayed on your tray or give a hint. The latter is particularly useful when playing a computer opponent on skill level 8.

The 16-bit versions have just 4,000 more words than the 20,000-word vocabulary of the Spectrum, and on higher levels some of the obscure ones seem almost specially designed for the game and aren't in most single-volume dictionaries. At the same time words like 'mount' and 'vinery' aren't included in the vocabulary, so a dictionary is useful for checking your own words when the computer challenges.

Unlike most boardgames, this loses little in its computer translation – and the 16-bit opponent can prove very tough indeed. If you like word games both conversions should prove very attractive.

ATARI ST: OVERALL 68%
AMIGA: OVERALL 70%

Unlke mst boardgms, ths lses lttle in its coputr transltn – mga



DOWNHILL IN EPYX STYLE

THE GAMES (WINTER EDITION)

Epyx/US GOLD

It may have missed the Winter Olympics at Calgary in Canada but *The Games* is just in time for the Summer Olympics. The delay was due to the American version containing references to **Epyx** sponsorship. They sponsored the American US Olympic Committee and as this is irrelevant to the UK and European market all references have been removed. The *Summer Edition* of *The Games* will follow.

Like previous Epyx programs in the Olympic Games series, *The Games*'s seven events start with the Opening Ceremony, lighting the Calgary Olympic Flame.

Up to eight players may compete in or practice any number of events. High scores can be saved to disk.

The luge is first, a sport requiring intense concentration as you slide feet first on a toboggan down an iced track at horrific speeds. It's similar to the bobsleigh run but without the added protection of the bob – the luge competitor needs to keep from hitting the track walls, take curves tightly and avoid drifting during the straights. Once moving down the track, the event becomes a simple matter of memorising the route, and maintaining a steady course using left and right on the joystick.

Second is cross-country skiing Power, continuous rhythm and sheer determination are all qualities skiers need to survive the punishment of crossing one, two or five kilometres of snowy terrain. Time the joystick movements with the skier's leg movements, climb slopes and push away to accelerate down hills. Build up a steady rhythm, keep the pace going and don't tire – stopping for more than four seconds results in a fault. This is a simple event, with simple game control, but it's well implemented.

The elegant sport of figure skating follows. The precision, perfection and art of skating on ice to music place the very highest demands on the player; expert coordination is required to succeed. Commencing the event, you select the music to skate to – ranging from classical to rock. Moves should be choreographed so they coincide with memorable points in the music. During the event joystick control is simple: push left or right around the rink and up to perform a move at a suitable time. Points are awarded for technical and artistic performance relating to execution and timing of each move. Despite the simple control, keeping up with the music is near impossible as the moves are difficult to follow through and their execution takes time; in this event, where timing is critical, it soon becomes tiresome.

In the ski jump a lone contestant skis down a slope and leaps off the ramp edge in an attempt to cover the maximum distance by soaring through the air. Pushing off from the top of the slope, you use first-person view to keep on course, avoiding the ramp sides and pressing FIRE at the exact moment to lift off. A dive into the snow is the reward for those who wait too long or press too soon. Once in the air, the view changes to third-person perspective, where an aerodynamic and stylish posture is required for the brief flight. Wait until the last minute before going into landing position to get a score. Scores are based on distance travelled and style of flight. The ramp run is relatively easy but landing at the last possible second is not, due to the lack of a height indicator and visual aids. It takes a lot of practice.

The rhythm method

The skiing continues with the slalom shown through a third-person view as you and an opponent race down the slope, swerving between the flags. 350- and 400-metre slopes are the challenge; each has two skill levels. The skier must keep close to the flags to reduce drift and record a good time – missing the sequence or hitting the side incurs a fault. The slalom is simple in gameplay and style but requires rhythm control and coordination throughout.

The sport of speed skating has already been recreated in Epyx's *Winter Games*. And for the event here, the skaters are displayed head-on and the track is shown around the outside. While merely a reworking of *Winter Games*, this event is enjoyable, using the familiar rhythm control method as the player times joystick movements with the motion of the skater's arms and legs. As always practice makes perfect and Epyx veterans shouldn't have any problems. It's an improvement on the *Winter Games* version in graphics and general feel.

The seventh and final event, downhill, is also graphically the crudest. Viewed in first-person perspective, you race down the mountain passing through gates. At the start, up to four cameras can be set up along the route to record progress, the view changing to third-person perspective as you pass them. The simple graphics of gates rushing past make it a fast event and help capture the thrills of downhill racing. To become proficient, remember the layout of gates and gradually increase your speed to set new world records.

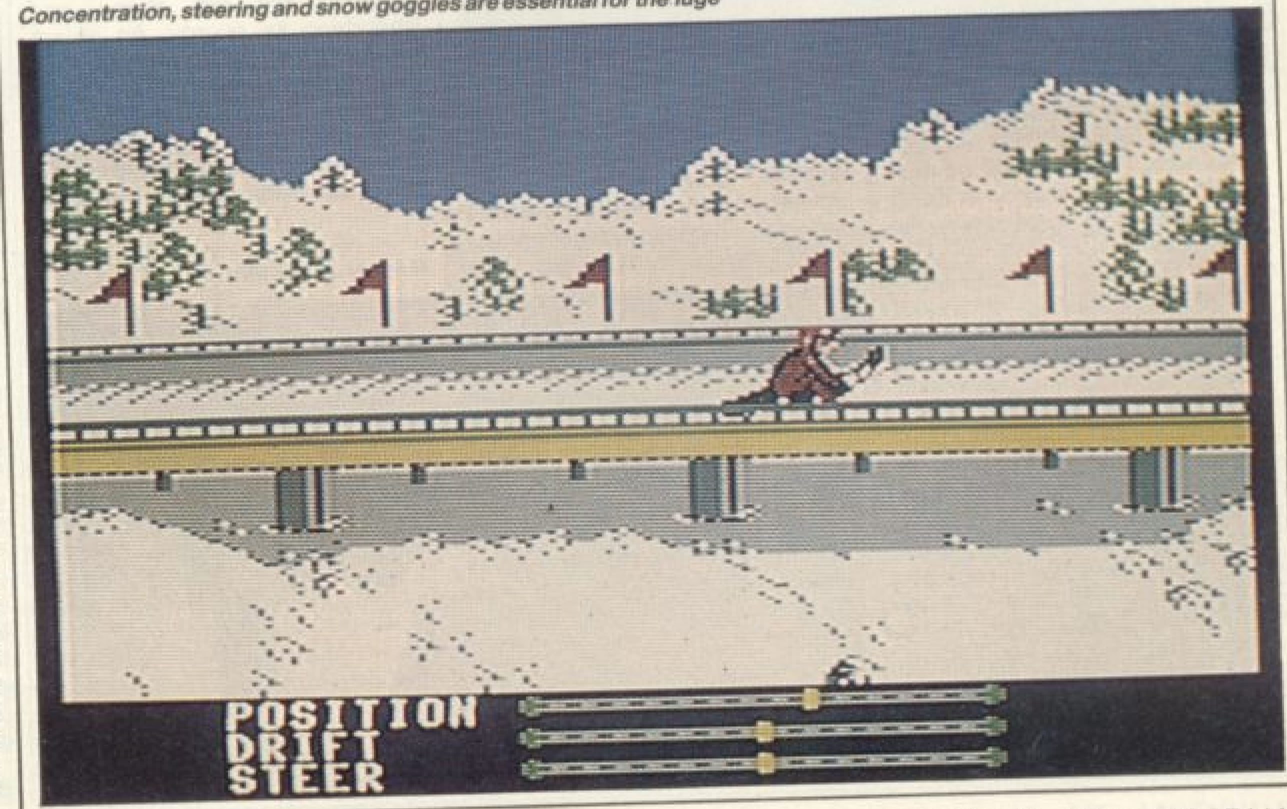
The Games ends with the closing ceremony with each country awarded its medals, the Olympic Flame going out and the night-time sky lit up by firework explosions.

With *Winter Games* already available there's a sense of déjà vu with *The Games (Winter Edition)*. Epyx have stuck to their familiar control methods – which are now showing their age. The sporting and competitive element which made earlier Epyx products so successful is lost in ridiculously difficult events such as figure skating. The concept is rather tired.

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99
True to the Epyx standards, the graphics for much of the game are excellent with animation to match – sound is also suitably atmospheric. The opening and closing ceremonies, medal awarding screens and overall presentation is of a high standard. Disk access occurs for each event meaning cassette owners get a raw deal once again.
OVERALL 75%

OTHER VERSIONS
Available shortly for Amstrad CPC: cassette £9.99 and diskette £14.99, Atari ST: £9.99, MSX 64K: cassette £8.99, and Spectrum 48/128: cassette £8.99 and diskette £12.99. Apple II and Amiga versions are due soon but no prices are available yet.

"There's a sense of déjà vu, the style is now showing its age"



Concentration, steering and snow goggles are essential for the luge

A WRONG CHARLIE

STARRING CHARLIE CHAPLIN

US Gold

Some nine months after TGM**001** showed screenshots of the ST version, the game has at last been released for some home computers. The programming house responsible is **Canvas**; their people wrote *Wizard Warz* and converted *Road Runner*. Conversions for Spectrum and Amstrad are by **Tiertech**.

Besides being a renowned actor, Chaplin was also a respected director/producer – the US Gold game has you taking on all these roles.

To begin with, as a prospective film-maker you must select which of the available scripts he will shoot – the best place to start is a low-budget movie with as few scenes as possible. Scenes can be shot in any order you choose, but while the sets and backdrops vary from scene to scene the basic objective is always the same: beat up the bad guys. Once shot, the scene is 'edited'

Your public

Once all the scenes have been shot to your satisfaction you must show the whole film – linked together by captions – to a cinema audience. Whether it's a runaway hit or a massive flop, audience reaction remains minimal.

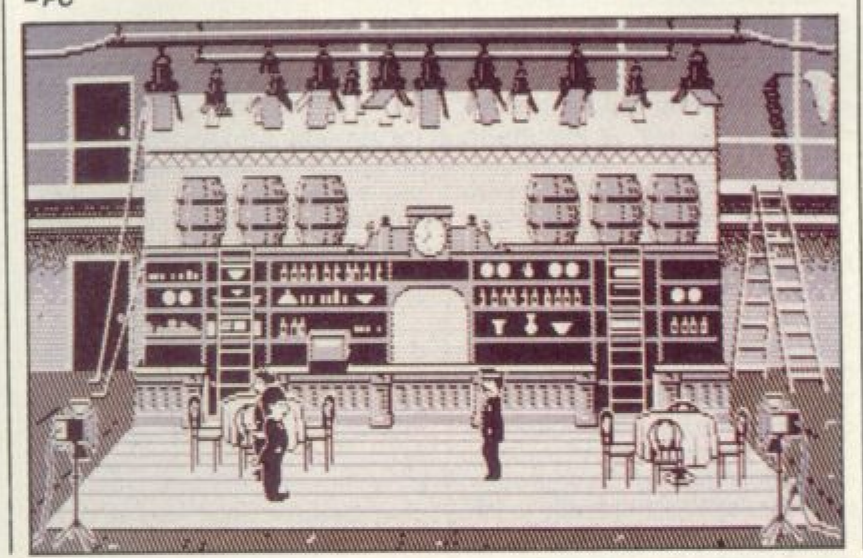
Starring Charlie Chaplin contains minimal film-making activities and is more a segmented beat-'em-up than anything else. If all the scenes had been linked together, it might have been a lot more impressive,

AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

The tunes are nice when you punch someone. The game remains fundamentally limited, however, a nice idea but with little action.

OVERALL 52%

Monochromatic monotony: the backdrops vary, but gameplay is predictable – PC



PC
Diskette: £24.99

A graphic masterpiece with each and every aspect finely detailed. In addition there are considerably more scripts than on the 8-bit offerings with an option to save movies onto disk and even a little music during the public showing. If playability had been better this would have been a very good game.

OVERALL 57%

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £8.99
Diskette: £12.99

Monochrome graphics are well suited to this machine and these do look very nice – in a Skool Daze-ish way. But sound FX are minimal and lend little atmosphere to this dull game.

OVERALL 51%

OTHER VERSIONS

Conversions are imminent for the Commodore 64/128: £9.99-cassette, £14.99-diskette and Atari ST: £19.99

" . . . a nice idea but with little action."

VERSION UPDATE

The conversion of the sentry?

THE SENTINEL

Firebird

Amiga: £19.95

ONE of the most original games ever to appear on home computers, *The Sentinel* caused something of a sensation in ZZAP 64! magazine where the Commodore 64 version of this original BBC game was judged unrateable and 'the best game ever written for a computer'.

TGM**001** carried news of an ST conversion and an 'imminent' Amiga one. The delay in the latter's release seems to have been justified, however, by the addition of an especially atmospheric soundtrack.

Gameplay remains essentially unchanged, with you becoming a Synthoid in a quest to overthrow the Sentinel's rule on 10,000 worlds. The battle is fought in terms of energy over solid 3-D landscapes from the Synthoid's point-of-view. On the first battleground, for instance, the Synthoid is placed at the lowest part of the landscape while a Sentinel clone rotates at the highest point on its special pedestal. The gaze of the Sentinel drains energy from wherever it looks, so survival depends upon staying ahead of this lighthouse-like absorption beam.

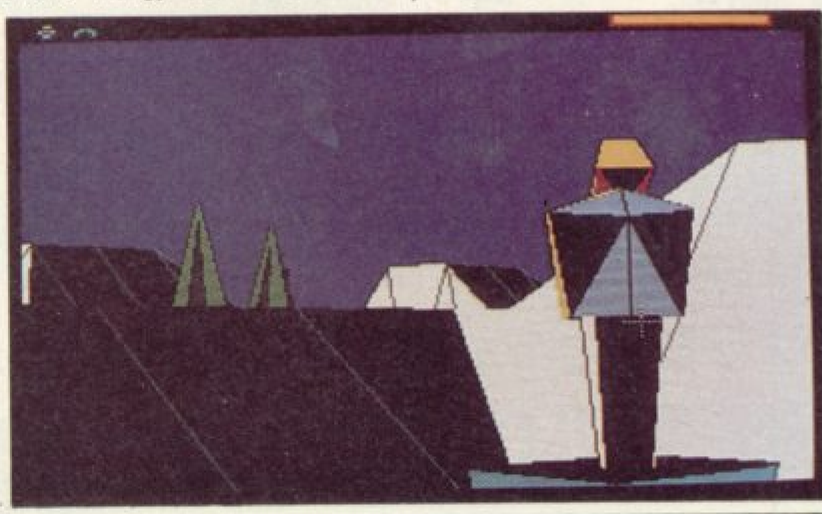
The Synthoid moves by creating a replica of itself and transferring across into it. Once in the new shape, you should conserve energy by guiding the cross-sight over to the old shape and absorbing its energy. An object can only be absorbed if its base square can be seen, so to absorb the level's Sentinel a player must constantly seek high ground, achieved by using energy to create boulders upon which the next Synthoid replica can be placed.

Energy can be collected by absorbing trees growing in the landscape. Each is worth one energy point; it's worth delaying the final assault on the Sentinel until as many trees as possible have been absorbed, because the amount of energy held at the end of a level determines how many levels you can jump for the next turn.

At the end of each level a code is given for the next, so ultimately it's possible to reach level 10,000. On later levels the Sentinel is aided and abetted by several Sentries, and there can be as many as five death-beams sweeping the landscape. Fortunately for 16-bit owners there's a help function giving an in-game map on demand.

To begin with *The Sentinel* may prove frustrating, although the mouse control option helpfully cuts down on the keys needed, but once the first landscape has been mastered you will be hooked on one of the most compelling games ever. Scrolling remains stepped, like *Driller*, but is much faster on the Amiga and, together with some excellent music, makes this a first-rate conversion of a first-class game.

It lights up our life



AMIGA: OVERALL 94%

HOLM IS WHERE THE HEART IS

THE FAERY TALE ADVENTURE

Mediagenic/Microillusions

Finally there's a Microillusions game not designed by the infamous Reichart Von Wolfsheild; instead one **David Joiner**, looking very menacing on the packaging in his award-winning black armour, lays claim to this graphical adventure. *The Faery Tale Adventure* has been an expensive import, but now **Mediagenic** have taken over distribution the price has become more reasonable.

Once upon a time they didn't have many different opening lines to a story, not even in the Magical Land of Holm where a Master at Arms and his family lived in a peaceful little village. The Master at Arms had three children, Julian, Phillip and Kevin, who were as different as could be. Destiny, it might seem, would be very different for the brothers – but eventually all were to be dedicated to one, all-important mission.

In the past the village had been protected by a talisman, but now it had been stolen so the Man at Arms was dispatched to find help. But when eventually he did return it was without help, and but little life remained in his wounded body. Spirit draining, he told of an evil Necromancer who held sway over the land, of Malbareth the Seer who had predicted such a time – and of a remedy; perhaps. The quest to defeat the Necromancer was dangerous, but the brothers undertook it with a proud determination.

Bloodily realistic



Walkabout

The story of the brothers and their quest is told in the time-honoured form of a graphical adventure with an isometric-like landscape of over 17,000 screens. The player controls one of the brothers by joystick, mouse or keyboard with the latter two also needed to cast spells, talk, buy things and access game options such as LOAD and SAVE. In addition such adventurish actions as looking for hidden objects and taking/giving/using them are possible. Initially, of course, the most useful actions are running and, when cornered, fighting with the skeletons, ghosts and ogres which roam the land. With some magical objects, and money to buy a sword or bow, adventuring can become a bit more positive.

The Faery Tale Adventure has some nice, thoughtful features – ghosts of the killed brothers give advice to the siblings that follow them on the quest. There's a lot of walking to be done, however, and the whirr of the disk drive announcing new enemies to battle can become wearisome after a while. Solving the game requires lots of mapping, fast reactions to kill the ogres who often carry valuable items, and patience. While no longer state-of-the-art, nor quite as atmospheric as *Where Time Stood Still*, this remains an intriguing graphic, virtually-arcade adventure that has hardly dated.

AMIGA
Diskette: £29.99

Graphically pleasing rather than astounding, some unconvincing animation is compensated for by realistic touches such as the welter of blood when someone is convincingly killed, and the bubbles surfacing overhead should a character walk under water. A nice tune and adequate sound FX accompany the graphics, making this an attractive and compelling game.

OVERALL 79%

OTHER VERSIONS

In the process of being written are conversions for the C64 and IBM PC, both for £29.99 on disk.

"While no longer state-of-the-art, Faery Tale **is an intriguing arcade adventure"**

VERSION UPDATE

RETURN TO GENESIS

Firebird

Amiga: £19.95

A GAME which began as a Steve Bak demonstration of high-speed, two-way horizontal scrolling on the ST (TGM**006** 81%) has now, somewhat ironically, ended up on the Amiga.

The game's scenario, which involves cloning and intergalactic war, is effective window-dressing around a fast-reaction, shoot-at-everything-but-scientists game. Each world has 12 scientists who must either be rescued or killed before the spaceship can go on to the next level. The almost inevitable alien fleet patrolling these worlds is especially lethal when attacking from the rear since inertia makes it tricky to turn and shoot. Of course it's perfectly possible to outrun these ships, but at the required speeds reactions are strained to the limit.

Collisions with the heavily detailed scenery can't directly harm your Nomad skimmer, but rebounding into the pursuing enemy invariably does. At first death seems all too close, but after practice you can survive – though the game is never easy. Some help is offered by rescued scientists, however, and once collected they can add triple-fire lasers, smart bombs and even invisibility/invulnerability to the ship. Any such selected add-on is lost when the ship is destroyed.

The Amiga's *Return To Genesis* is virtually indistinguishable from the technically flawless ST original. On the Amiga the effortless scrolling is a little less obviously 'impressive', but the appeal of the graphics and the exceptionally tough, but fair, challenge remains intact. It's a pity that the later levels – easily seen, as with the ST version, in the ten-level demo – are not of the same excellent standard as the earlier ones.

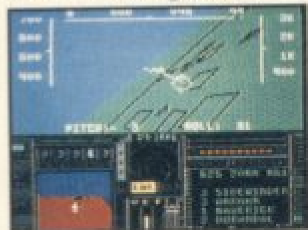
AMIGA: OVERALL 77%

It's hard to tell the two flawless versions apart

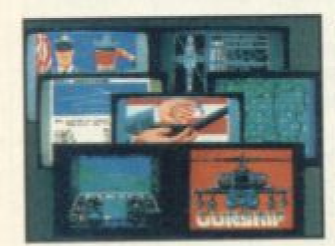


IS REAL EXCITEMEN

Project Stealth Fighter

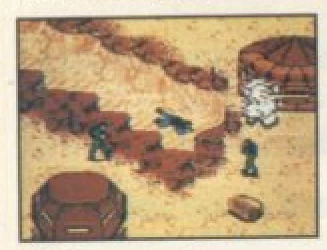


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N T PASSING YOU BY?

OWN GOAL

PETER BEARDSLEY'S INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL

Grandslam Entertainments

Software houses have rapidly realised the sales potential of licensing major football celebrities to adorn the covers of their games. Gary Lineker and Peter Shilton have already been snapped up and even the inimitable duo Saint and Greavsie are soon to make the perilous journey onto home computers with Elite Systems. Now, Peter Beardsley, one of Liverpool's most successful attackers of recent times has been signed up by Grandslam Entertainments to promote a game by **Teque Software Design** – authors of many Grandslam products including *The Flintstones*, *Terramex* and *Chubby Gristle*.

Peter Beardsley's International Football recreates the European Championships in which the cream of the teams meet to decide the Champions of Europe.

One or two players can take part in the football action, each having a free rein to choose any one of the 34 teams on offer. Eight teams play in two groups through the first qualifying rounds, the four successful teams go through to the semi-finals to decide who meets in the final.

To begin you select the length of the match (it can be from five to up to 20 minutes), choose a one- or two-player league and begin the championships. The matches are played over a pitch made up of three horizontally scrolling screens. A full complement of 22 players take part, but the referee and linesmen seem to have vanished. You are supposed to control the player nearest the ball (highlighted by an arrow over his head), unfortunately the computer often selects a player some distance away making it difficult to gain possession. The goalkeeper is also under your direct control and comes into play as and when necessary.

Corners, goal kicks, throw-ins and free kicks are all catered for, the strength of a ball kick or throw-in is directly proportional to the length of time the fire button is held down. This's a simple method, but unfortunately it fails to include back-kicks, chipping and slicing of the ball.

At last, a sports game for today . . . you only win if you cheat – ST

Tough *and* simple

If only the real life European Championships were as easy as the computer game. Within minutes of beginning the game, we discovered a nasty cheat whereby simply running along with the ball, occasionally tapping it, reduces the opposition to mere bystanders, leaving only the goalkeeper as a last ditch defence. A normal game is extremely tough to play as the defenders are very quick off the mark and annoyingly brilliant at intercepting free balls.

While attempting to do nothing more than concentrate on the action of football, the computer game leaves out fundamental elements. Tactics are very difficult to employ and the other players rarely move into good positions from which goals can be scored, making a run through the defences the only successful option. The cheat makes it a very easy game, without which it's almost impossible to win. The final nail in the game's coffin is the computer's frequent inability to select the player nearest the ball.

"Tactics are difficult to employ and players rarely move into good positions"

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

Graphically, Peter Beardsley's International Football **is very good, the players are detailed, neatly animated and move well, with good use made of the ST's colours. Sound is likewise of a high standard, with a series of jolly football tunes continuously playing and some effective soccer sounds – such as the crowd cheering when a goal is scored.**

OVERALL 52%

AMIGA
Diskette: £19.95

In all respects this version is very similar to its ST counterpart. The tunes are slightly slower adding a more sedate atmosphere to the action. Gameplay has been tweaked a little allowing the player a better chance of intercepting and keeping the ball.

OVERALL 55%

OTHER VERSIONS

Peter Beardsley **is to make an appearance on the Commodore 64/128: cass £9.95, disk £14.95, Amstrad CPC: cass £8.95, disk £14.95, Spectrum 48/128: cass £8.95 and MSX: cass £8.95. A PC version is being considered.**

VERSION UPDATE

PHANTASM

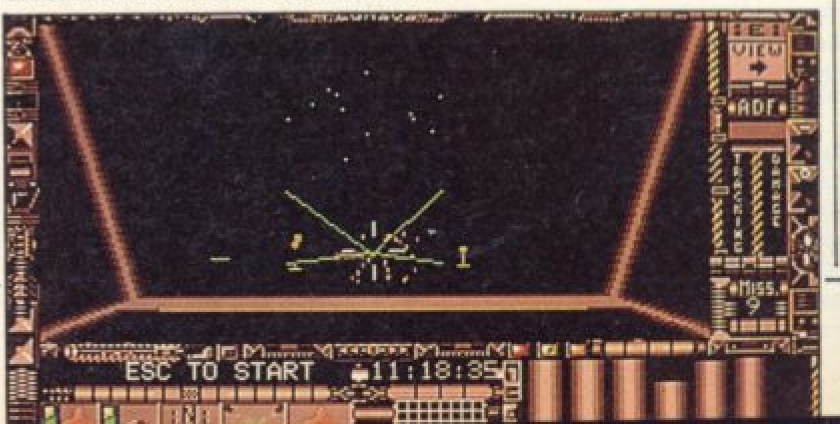
Exocet

Amiga: £19.95

LAST month we reviewed the ST release (TGM**008**, 73%) of this *Tau Ceti* clone, now converted for the Amiga by **Keith Jackson**.

The action takes place on an enemy moon where, before your ship can take off, you must find and destroy eight 'reconstitutions' located somewhere in 64 different zones. Exploration offers a classic *Tau Ceti* pilot's-eye-view skimming across the 3-D landscape. Enemy ships, tanks and fortresses appear on the horizon and realistically grow bigger as you approach them. Lasers, missiles and antimissiles are your prime weapons in battle, with death inevitable if shields or fuel reach zero. Four skill levels, including a special training level where you cannot score, provide plenty of long-term challenge – but by comparison with Pete Cooke's original, the lack of depth is disappointing. One improvement is the replacement of a damage report window with a display panel which blanks out system icons as they're destroyed. (This has since been added to ST versions as well.) Apart from the superior music, however, the Amiga game is virtually identical to the ST one.

AMIGA: OVERALL 73%



Unreconstitutional activities in **Phantasm**

HOP AND GLORY

HOPPING MAD
Elite Systems

Inspired by *Cataball* – included 'free' on one of Elite's Trio packs – this imaginative game idea has been expanded and improved on the Commodore 64 by **Chris Coupe**'s coding and **Mark Cooksey**'s graphics. Spectrum and Amstrad conversions have both been done by **Neil Latarche** (coding) and **Lizzie** (graphics).

This distinctly surreal game comes to us unencumbered by a convoluted scenario explaining why four balls might be bouncing, in sequence, across various landscapes. It is difficult to imagine what could motivate four relatively normal looking balls to go globe-trotting collecting balloons. Perhaps there are things in life that are better not known.

Hopping Mad has 14 levels of increasingly bizarre landscapes, all of which require the balls to collect ten balloons before accessing the next level. Collisions can dematerialise any of the four balls and when all are lost a life is taken. There are three lives to begin with, easily lost to such assorted enemies as Venus fly-traps, bees and sharp rocks on the first level. Later levels have the balls bobbing on the sea bed, trembling though a haunted forest and basking under a Wild West sun.

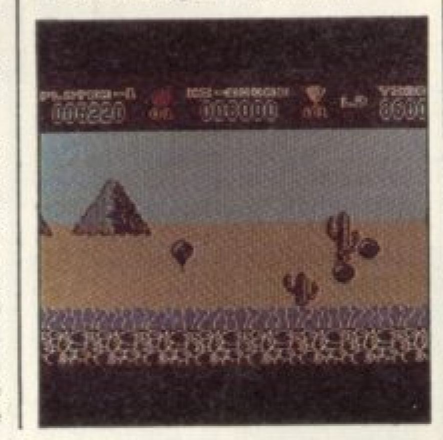
Ball-bursting objects change according to the level – from starfish to ghosts to cacti. Point bonuses vary similarly, with apples being the most fruitful on level one. Even more points can be gathered by quickly completing the game to receive a time bonus. Once a level is finished you start the next with all four balls. Gameplay across the three 8-bit versions (no others are planned) is similar, only varying slightly in difficulty.

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £11.99

Colourful sideways scrolling games are a forte of the Commodore and without even trying, the machine presents Hopping Mad **in its most colourful form. A jolly intro tune and effective sound FX make this an enjoyable, if less than amazing, challenge.**

OVERALL 67%

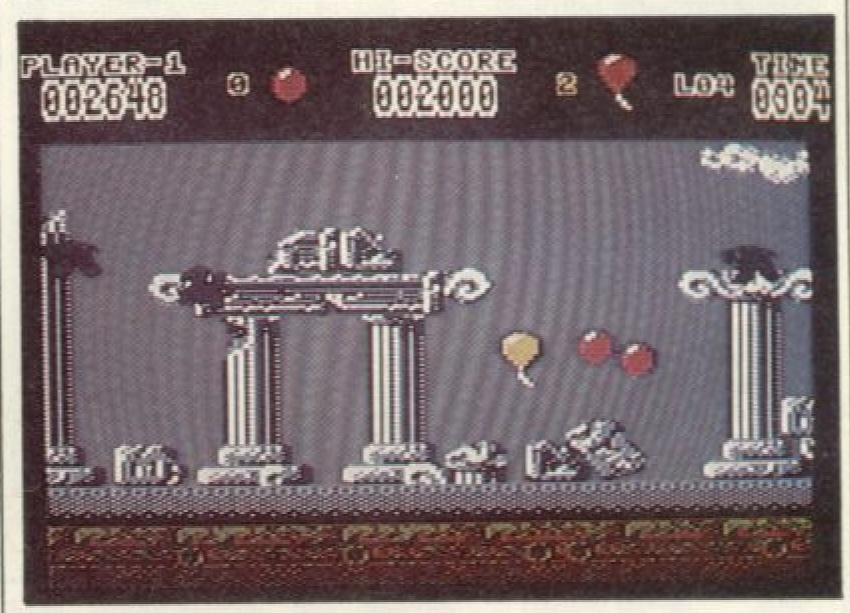
Blackballed again – Spectrum



SPECTRUM 48/128 Cassette: £7.99, Diskette: £12.99

This version scrolls well but the need to avoid colour clash makes the balls a rather dull black – in fact the graphics are generally unremarkable. Sound FX are perfunctory, but there is a nice intro tune. Gameplay is much the same as on the C64, albeit harder.

OVERALL 66%



Colourful sideways scrolling and effective FX – Commodore 64

AMSTRAD CPC Cassette: £9.99, Diskette: £14.99

Scrolling is smooth but, as on the Spectrum, at the price of some dull graphics with a four-colour, mode-one palette unimaginatively utilised. While not making best use of the machine, it's as rewarding to play as the Spectrum game.

OVERALL 64%

"An enjoyable, if less than amazing, challenge"

VERSION UPDATE

SKYFOX II
Electronic Arts

PC: £24.95

WRITTEN by American company **Dynamix** – creators of *Arcticfox*, *Skyfox II* was reviewed in TGM**004** (Commodore 64/128, 85%.)

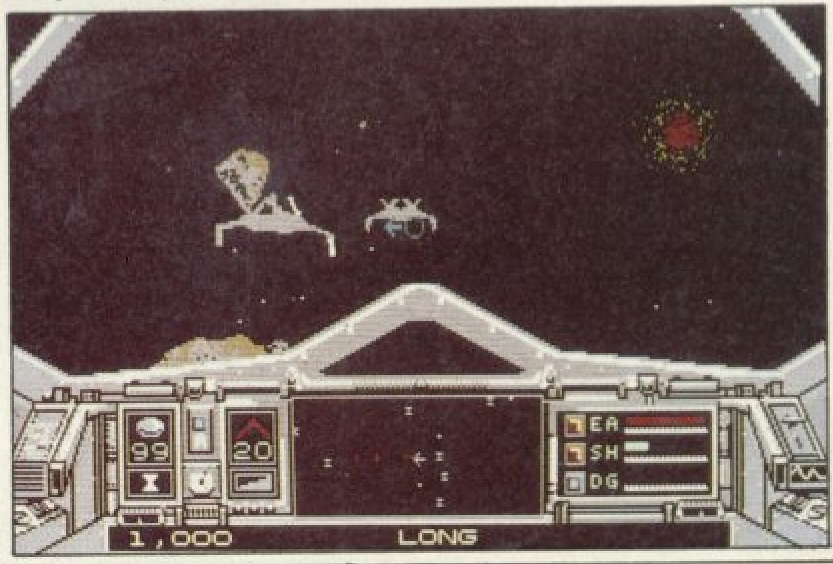
Using keyboard, mouse or joystick, take off for deep space in the new, improved Skyfox II Warp Fighter to battle with Xenomorphs through ten possible missions. These include escorting spaceships through hostile territories, all-out attacks on enemy forces, defensive roles and deep-space exploration. An Asteroid zone separates Xenomorph and Federation space. The Warp Fighter is armed with pulse bombs, neutron disruptors and antimatter mines to destroy enemy spaceships, starbases and passing asteroids.

The style of presentation is different to *Skyfox*, but the gameplay is similar, involving launching, navigating to a target with the subsequent destruction and return to base to complete the mission.

The full range of EGA colours are not used, but the subtle shadings create an effective atmosphere of future war. Sound comprises only moderate explosions and laser sounds – nothing in the *Mach 3* league. Apart from the greater speed and slight improvements in graphic definition, the gameplay is a direct copy of the Commodore 64 version. While not an outstanding game, *Skyfox II* is certainly an improvement over the original *Skyfox* in graphics, sonics and gameplay – and it offers variety in the ten missions and challenge in the five skill levels.

PC: OVERALL 77%

A Skyfox in sequel's clothing – with great speed and shading



DOZING AWAY . . .

KILLDOZERS
Lankhor

Lankhor is a well-respected French software house, with a number of successful releases in that country – especially in the adventure field. Strange, then, that the company's first UK release should be one of their weaker arcade games.

Controlling one of a selection of four differently equipped Killdozers your objective is to trundle around a flick-screen maze, viewed from above, and rescue engineers from the clutches of the evil supercomputer Unicom. One engineer is held captive on each level; rescue him and you move on to the next of six levels. The floor of the maze complex is dotted with different slabs which either send your Killdozer spinning, change its direction or form a barrier to prevent movement in a particular direction.

The Killdozers are each armed with three different weapons which are accessible at any point, to blast the hordes of robotic aliens in your path.

I tank, therefore I am

Killdozers attempts to provide a combination of arcade, role-playing, adventure and strategy game features. But unfortunately these elements merely give a confused feeling.

The point of most maze games is to solve puzzles and progress . . . but not so with *Killdozers*, you simply trundle on through blasting away. The limited action quickly becomes tedious, the overall task is neither rewarding nor challenging, and *Killdozers* is a disappointing launch product for Lankhor.

A *Killdozer* construction set is supplied with the game, incorporating few restrictions – although you have to use the graphics already provided – it is easy to use and clearly documented. Designer mazes can be saved out to a data disk, but they won't run without the utility present. The construction set is an interesting addition to the package but hardly makes purchase worthwhile.



Rubble without a cause: wandering through a maze of lethal slabs soon palls

A ST-RATEGIC STEP TO A 16-BIT FUTURE

QUADRALIEN
Logotron

Logotron's first ST release marks their determination to be almost exclusively 16-bit from now on. *Quadralien*'s programmers, **Astral Software**, have had one previous release – *Xor* – which was converted to the ST for Atari.

The vast orbital nuclear-fission complex called Astra represented the cutting edge of 21st-century technology – and all the dangers contained therein. When Astra went on security alert, allowing no visitors and blocking all control transmissions, its makers declared a crisis. When telemetry indicated that control devices had broken down, making an orbital meltdown imminent, most people panicked.

You don't panic, and are subsequently floated across to the Astra from a shuttle and installed in its control room. Your aim is to shut the complex down by controlling its complement of workerdroids. The Astra is made up of three levels leading up to a central core complex. Passcodes are required for access to all but the first level. Each level is made up of six rooms – each several screens big – which must be cleared of all radioactive material before temperatures rise high enough to kill you.

For each room there is a choice of six droids, from which two can be picked to carry out the clean-up operation (presented in overhead, flickscreen fashion.) One droid can absorb up to 25 radioactive items before needing to be scrubbed at an information point, others can carry only five but are more energy-efficient, can carry bigger energy charges or have a better laser system. Also important when selecting droids is whether they have a Geiger counter and/or carry detonators.

Repellors

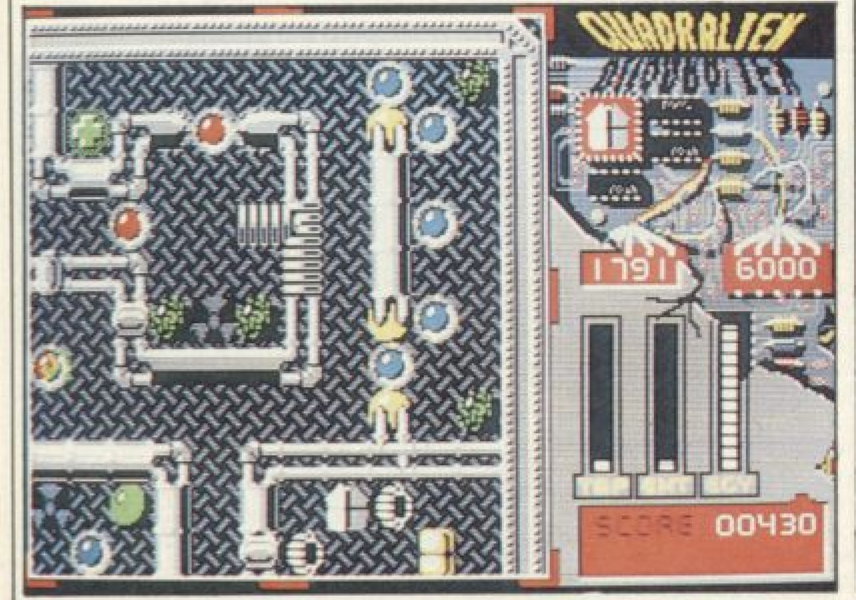
In room one gameplay consists simply of finding the material and absorbing it, later on puzzle and arcade elements come to the fore. Puzzle elements derive from red attractor and blue repellor crates which react with each other according to type. Shoving the correct crate can mean the difference between smoothly getting to the radioactivity and having to laser your way through. Also to be puzzled over are coolant barrels which when pushed down utility chutes lower the temperature. These barrels are rarely located close to the chutes and have most influence when temperatures are high – and dangerous. Directional forcefields allowing one-way access, magnetic tracks spinning crates around and non-laser rooms strain the old grey matter further.

Arcade action comes on the tougher rooms where the quadraliens responsible for the control malfunctions are to be found. Most are contained in special multicoloured chambers, but when shot zoom around at high speed, draining energy at a frantic rate if they contact your droid – killing them requires good tactics and fast reactions. While it



Per ardua ad Astra

Logotron embraces 16-bit with the puzzles of Quadralien



ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

Killdozers is an uninteresting game, beefed up with reasonable 16-bit graphics and sampled sound FX. Unfortunately the frequent, laborious disk access and poor playability are not hidden by cosmetic frills. The flick-screen technique is needlessly slow, making the whole game a nonstarter.

OVERALL 37%

OTHER VERSIONS

There are no conversions planned.

" . . . the task is neither rewarding nor challenging, Killdozers **is disappointing."**

lacks the general complexity, toughness and instant playability of *Boulderdash* or *Deflektor*, if you enjoy a challenging strategic puzzle you should like *Quadralien*.

ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

Static graphics are effective and occasionally nice, but make little use of the machine, and the flickscreen can be irritating despite a pan-ahead function. Sound FX are minimal – although those that exist are good – and there's a useful choice between joystick, mouse or keys for control. In short, a complex puzzle-game effectively, if not astonishingly, presented.

OVERALL 71%

OTHER VERSIONS

An Amiga version is due for release about now for the same price as the ST, a PC version will be slightly more expensive at £24.95 and should be released in September.

"If you enjoy a challenging strategic puzzle you should like Quadralien**"**

VERSION UPDATE

Impossible dream

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION II

US GOLD

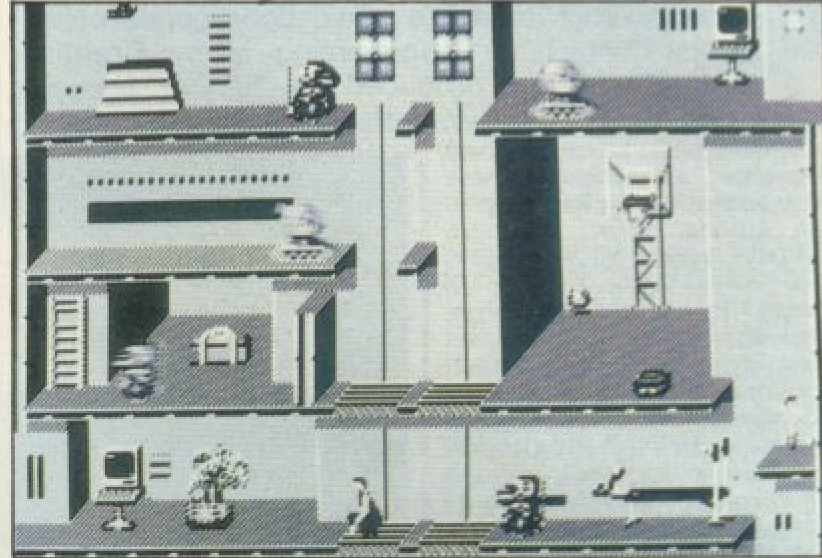
PC: £24.99
Amstrad CPC cassette: £9.99, diskette: £14.99

FIRST reviewed in TGM**006**, with a version update in TGM**007**, conversions continue to trickle out for this sequel, with more still to come. The PC version has been programmed by **Novotrade Software Studios** – they wrote the original game – while the Amstrad game – in a shining example of Glasnost – was done by **Andromeda** of Hungary.

Basic gameplay remains true to the *Impossible Mission* formula; platforms-and-ladders, running and jumping to collect items while avoiding the six types of sentrybots. Both versions load in towers as they come, with the Amstrad cassette player needing to be zeroed for the moment when you die. One advantage of the PC game is that it can be saved.

Sound on both is minimal, the Amstrad version marginally the superior. Graphically the PC is very good indeed – its lack of colour never really shows since even the ST version used few colours. In addition the PC's 16-bit chip makes gameplay very quick indeed, so that apart from the sound the game is quite close to the ST one.

The only slight failing is that a conventional joystick won't work with the Amstrad PC keyboard, and the keys aren't definable. By way of contrast the Amstrad CPC version reproduces much of the colour of the C64 game, but only at the cost of being quite markedly slower. While it's certainly possible to get used to this, lack of sound and animation on the lift section make clear that best use isn't being made of the computer, although it's a great deal better than the original Amstrad *Impossible Mission*. Another slight drawback is its toughness, with the half hour or so allowed per tower soon being eaten up by frequent deaths.



Snaking at top speed through the platforms and ladders – PC

In both games, however, the basic gameplay is preserved, making both recommended buys for fans of the genre.

PC: OVERALL 84%
AMSTRAD CPC: OVERALL 72%

VERSION UPDATE

SIDE ARMS

Capcom

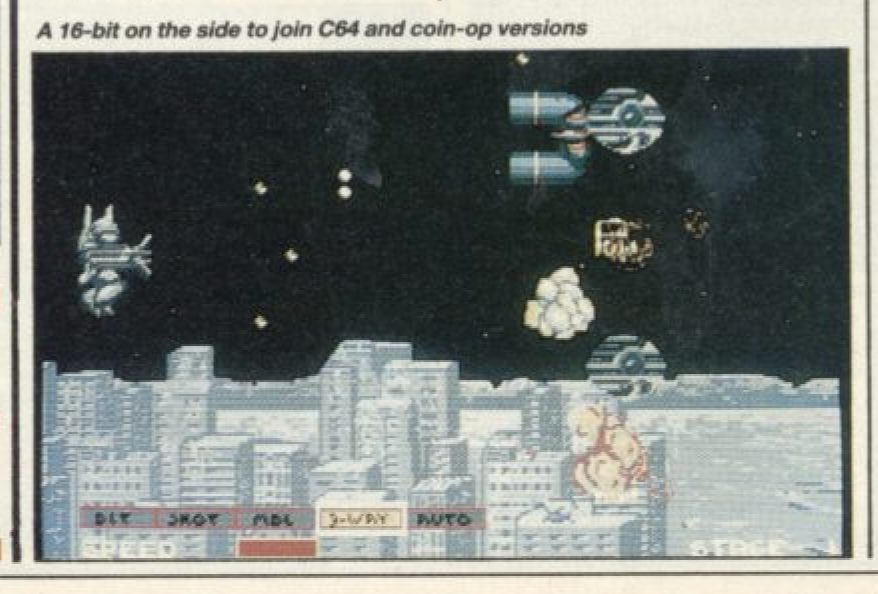
Atari ST: £19.99

SIDE ARMS is released on the Capcom label, marketed by GO! and programmed by **Probe Software**. It's a rather old coin-op now, and the Commodore 64/128 version was reviewed in TGM**004** (59%).

Side Arms on the ST is first and foremost a single-player game, a major difference considering the arcade machine and 64 version were dual-player games. The objective is to destroy the guardian aliens and the snake-like mother alien infesting the final stage – stage ten. The hero is a trooper armed with a jet-pac, a laser which can be upgraded to any of five other weapons.

For the most part, the graphics are very good; the warrior is devoid of anything more than subtle, grey colouring, but collecting the power-up capsule turns him into an eight-way-firing supersoldier, graphically not much different but far more devastating in effect. The background landscapes are high in detail and scroll smoothly.

A 16-bit on the side to join C64 and coin-op versions



Later levels have vertically and horizontally scrolling caverns, limiting your movement even further – agility, speed and accuracy are essential. Large, fast-moving aliens, unfairly small alien bullets, death-by-contact rock faces and stationary spaceships take up vital space in each cave, making it a tough, fast game. The game is joystick- or mouse-controlled, although the former falls a long way short of providing the precision required to stay alive. Without the mouse, the game is very hard to play.

ST *Side Arms* contains more gameplay than it did on the Commodore; but, with only one warrior to control, it becomes merely another shoot-'em-up with better than average graphics and sound – the tune playing throughout is well done and unobtrusive, other effects are limited to laser-fire and explosions. However, it is an enjoyable action-packed game which has come across well from the coin-op.

ATARI ST: OVERALL 72%



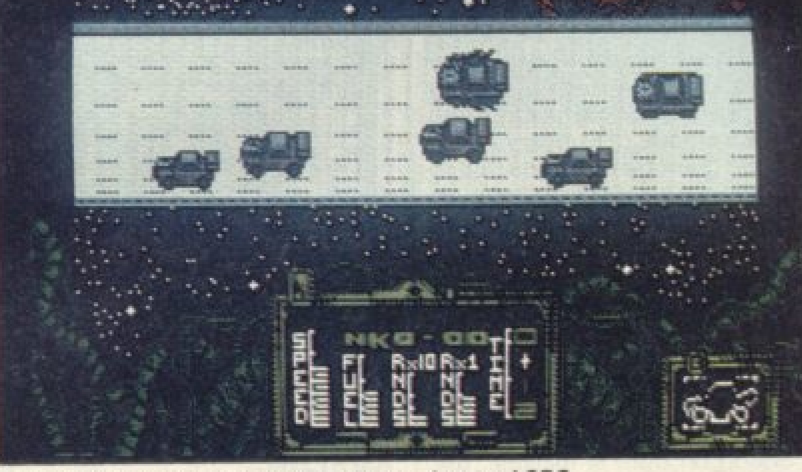
OVERHEAD KILL

THE FURY
Martech

After the Page 3 glamour of *Vixen* Martech's latest game reverts to the more conventional appeal of full-blooded violence. Programming is by **Creative Reality**, who also produced the *2000 AD* licences *Sláine* and *Nemesis The Warlock* for Martech.

In the late 1990s an extraordinary relaxation in American laws allowed the first Rim Race track in the Arizona desert. 20 km in diameter, the track claimed 438 lives during the two weeks of races. By 2010 the races' phenomenal popularity led to an even bigger track being built in orbit around Raal's moon. Media attention was subsequently heightened by the death of a driver in a mysterious incident known as The Fury. The disaster has been attributed to passing through into another dimension.

The Fury is essentially an overhead-view, sideways scrolling, shoot-'em-up, race game. Moving the joystick left accelerates the car, while moving right decelerates it and up and down move the car in the appropriate directions. Pressing FIRE releases the selected weapon on Killing Races – where winning depends on exceeding your race kill quota. The other two types of races are Time Runs – to continue, you must beat a qualification time – and Tag Races, where the car is selected as 'it' and has to suffer constant damage. Touching another transfers the tag. In both these races weapons aren't allowed, so only by ramming can a kill bonus (in Galactic Groats) be earned. Money isn't the only incentive to violence, however, since any driver judged to be boring has lethal cross-hairs aimed on him or her.



Galactic tag, Alleykat style, in The Fury – Amstrad CPC

Escape pods

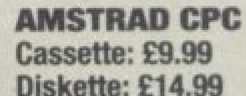
After each race the player is awarded Groats according to performance and these can be used to buy various items. The most expensive are the ten cars which can replace the standard one players start with. In the mid-price range, for example, shield power is increased but only at the cost of higher fuel consumption.

While it is suggestive of a horizontally-scrolling *Alleykat*, poor graphics and restricted gameplay make *The Fury* distinctly second-rate. Blasting enemies off the road provides some fun, but the non-violent races lack excitement and it's irritating that with so much empty screen the vital damage indicator is both small and hard to read.

SPECTRUM 48/128 Cassette: £8.99, Diskette: £14.99

The Spectrum has a different graphic for the player's car, distinguishing it from the others, and slightly more room to manoeuvre. Sound FX are mostly confined to a reasonable engine drone which does little to enhance some nice, occasionally original but poorly presented ideas .

OVERALL 57%



AMSTRAD CPC
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

With a noticeably smaller playing area than the Spectrum, the blandness of the in-game graphics – every car is identical – is yet more apparent. Sound FX are functional but nothing special, which describes the game itself.

OVERALL 53%

OTHER VERSIONS

A Commodore 64 version will be released in July at £9.99 on cassette and £12.99 on diskette.

"Poor graphics and restricted gameplay make The Fury **distinctly second-rate"**

VERSION UPDATE

Polishing a cliche

SIDEWINDER
Mastertronic

Atari ST: £9.99

ORIGINALLY an Amiga-based arcade coin-op, this superb vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up earned 93% in its Amiga home computer version reviewed in TGM006. Three months later **Binary Designs** (*Glider Rider*, *ST Road Wars*) have translated the game for the Atari ST.

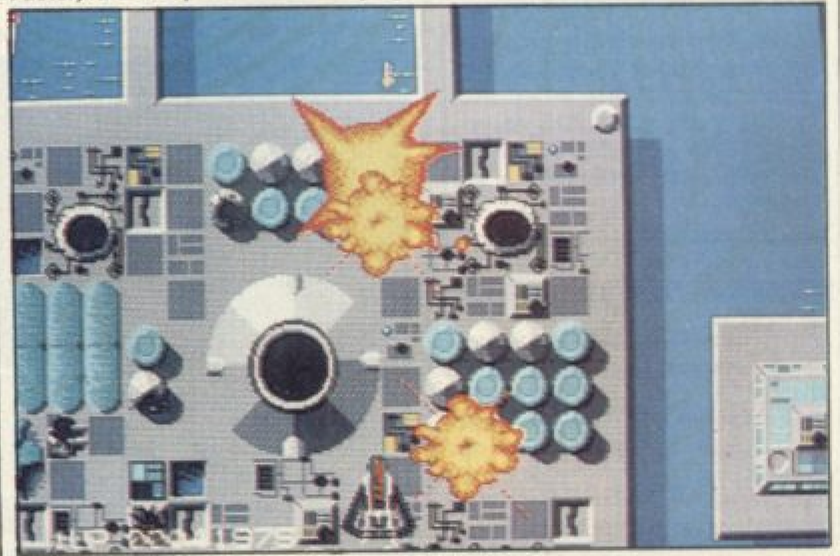
The scenario is off-the-peg standard: lone fighter against the huge enemy ship and its massed defences. While originality is not the game's strong suit, its intelligent and graphically polished reworking of a computer cliché is. Each of the game's five sections, loaded from disk, feature distinct and quite beautifully detailed landscapes ranging from leafy hydroponics farms to the fleshy, *Alien Syndrome*ish level 5. Probably the best part of the landscapes, however, is the immensely satisfying explosions which accompany their destruction. In addition once the flames burn out you can see the often still glowing wreckage left behind – a nice, realistic touch which together with incredible sound effects helps make gameplay so addictive.

The objective of the game is simply to survive the enemy onslaught while making as high a score as possible. Alien defences include vast numbers of gun turrets, ground crawlers and kamikaze fighters, the numbers and ferocity of which depend on the five skill levels, changeable in-game. Helping the player are power packs giving rapid fire, more powerful shots, shields and a hover (temporarily arresting the forward scroll to allow complete devastation of the immediate area).

The only real ST flaw is the slight jerkiness of the sideways scroll, which – as on the Amiga – gives the player some very useful room to manoeuvre in the game's margins. Graphically, however, the ST game is extremely close to the Amiga and, incredibly, scrolls twice as quickly, making this version a lot faster and harder to play. *Sidewinder* on the Amiga was a great game making good use of the machine; ST *Sidewinder* is even better.

ATARI ST: OVERALL 94%

Faster, furiouser, and more satisfying than the Amiga version



A GREAT ESCAPE

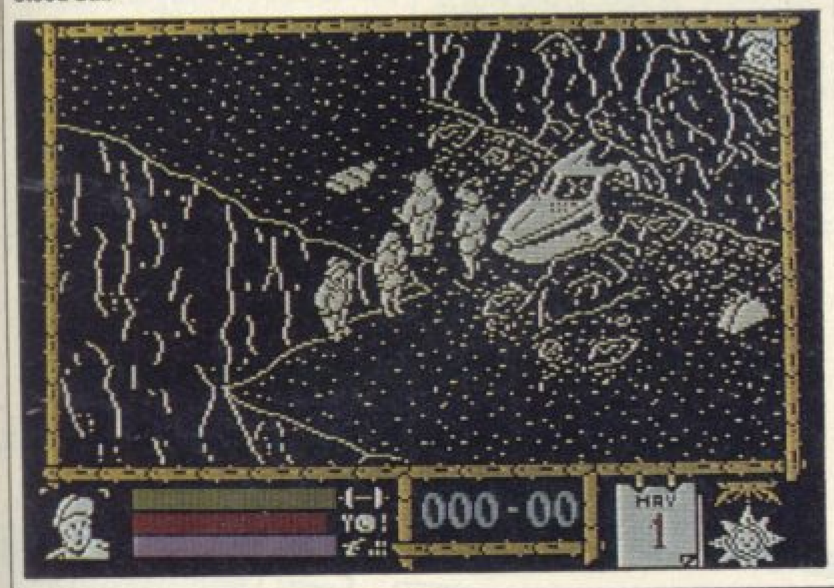
WHERE TIME STOOD STILL

Ocean

It used to seem time would never stand still for **Denton Designs** – they've been one of the most imaginative and successful programming teams in the Spectrum's history. And for years they kept surprising us with *Gift Of The Gods*, with the first major icon-driven arcade adventure – *Shadowfire* – and with the ebulliently bizarre *Frankie Goes To Hollywood*. But we've had to wait almost two years for this Spectrum 128K-only game, which picks up stylistically where the team's 1986 *The Great Escape* left off.

The adventure begins with a plane crash on a remote, Himalayan plateau hundreds of stormblown kilometres from the aircraft's flight plan. The crash destroys the plane – but miraculously leaves passengers and pilot unharmed. As the stunned survivors mill around the wreckage, the pilot, Jarret, takes command. His marooned fellow companions are not natural survivors; Clive is wealthy and overweight while his daughter and her fiancé Dirk also appear used to the easy life. Jarret has his work cut out if he is to successfully return his entourage to the relative safety of civilisation.

Still on top of the world: Denton Designs visit the Himalayas for Where Time Stood Still



The use of food

Presented in scrolling, isometric perspective, *Where Time Stood Still* is monochrome but has numerous features – a bridge, a native village and waterfalls, for example – so perfectly detailed that colour would be just a distraction (even the ST version will be monochrome). At the bottom of the screen the group's strength, health and ammunition are displayed as bars. Each character has an individual inventory, selected from the group menu, and can be ordered to walk over and pick up nearby objects. If one character should 'use' the food or drink carried, the group collectively benefits. Similarly the number of points scored depends on how many characters remain in your party.

Normally you have full joystick control over Jarret, but care should be taken not to set too fast a pace or others may be left behind. Alternatively if you do nothing they might wander off on their own.

Should Jarret die, you are given the choice of remaining characters to control. If they are still together whoever you pick will be leader, if not you have to go it alone. Dangers to watch out for include pterodactyls that carry off people to their deaths, a swamp monster and rock falls. Most dangers are announced with a snatch of ominous music, giving at least some chance to respond. Fortunately each team member has a gun, but care should be taken not to act recklessly.

The lack of a game-saving function can mean too much repetitive retracing of your path, but by holding down FIRE you can make the survivors run a lot faster – albeit at the cost of a greater energy drain. And with so many different things to be discovered, from mysterious temples to pygmy natives, this is one game you simply won't be able to give up on.

SPECTRUM 128
Cassette: £7.95
Diskette: £14.95

An instant classic on the Spectrum – the game's great wealth of graphic detail is suggestive of a black-and-white movie. As a 128K-only release this has predictably good sound, including a nice tune which can be turned off, and excellent spot FX. Where Time Stood Still **is a great game which sets the standard for other 'movie' software to follow.**

OVERALL 95%

OTHER VERSIONS

The Atari ST conversion is imminent, but a PC version has become doubtful – both would be £19.95.

"An instant classic on the Spectrum"

VERSION UPDATE

THE FLINTSTONES

Grandslam Entertainments

Spectrum 48/128 Cassette: £8.95
Amstrad CPC Cassette: £8.95, Diskette: £12.95
Commodore 64/128 Cassette: £9.95, Diskette: £14.95

FROM the Amiga and ST versions (TGM**006** 76% and 75% respectively) Fred Flintstone, man of prehistoric suburbia, has the tasks of family life on his hands in these 8-bit conversions by Teque Software Developments. The game plan is identical to previous versions with four games rolled into one package.

Fred's first job is to redecorate the cave, while trying to stem young Pebbles's artistic talent for graffiti, and not lose the energetic paintbrush (a squirrel). Having painted the cave, Fred takes the car to the Bedrock Bowling alley – however, the road is a hazardous one so expect a few wheel changes en route. Fred enters a ten-pin bowling challenge with his old buddy Barney Rubble; achieving double Barney's score makes Fred the winner. Fred troops wearily home to discover Pebbles has done a runner, and he has to search for her amid the platforms and ladders of a building site.

All three 8-bit conversions mirror their predecessors well – with graphics that retain the impressive cartoon-like qualities. However, playability remains hard – especially the painting scene. The Commodore version moves at a fair rate, while the Spectrum and Amstrad CPC versions are slow enough to cause frustration.

A reasonable rendition of the *Flintstones* theme tune – written by Ben Daglish – burbles during gameplay on all three versions except Spectrum 48K.



From beyond the cave: happy families in prehistoric suburbia – Commodore 64

SPECTRUM 48/128:
OVERALL 65%

AMSTRAD CPC:
OVERALL 68%

COMMODORE 64/128:
OVERALL 63%

IN SPACE NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCHEME

REACH FOR THE STARS
Electronic Arts

Out five years ago for the Commodore 64 and Apple II computers, **Strategic Studies Group** has restructured this to incorporate menus and a new Advanced Game – included in this third edition PC version. Since Electronic Arts are now distributing the Australian-based **SSG**'s products in the UK, expect to see a lot more in TGM.

Reach For The Stars is a game of interstellar domination with four empires racing to explore, colonise and conquer a wraparound 34 x 23 2-D galactic grid.

Completely devoid of any kind of scenario and with some nice, but abstract graphics, the game's appeal rests almost entirely on how it plays. Up to four players can take part, but if only one plays the computer controls the other empires, at any of three skill levels. The aim is to win the most victory points by the end of the game, which is typically set between 40 and 150 turns, but may be extended to last until one player has control over the entire galaxy. Victory points are awarded for the development of colonies, destroying enemy ships, conquering enemy planets and destroying enemy colonies. The essential rule of combat is



The galaxy's wonders revealed – and all its wealth

concentration, the bigger your fleet the bigger your margin of victory over the lesser force. This naturally places great emphasis on the economic power of your empire in churning out starships.

All production depends on the number of resource points (RPs) generated, these in turn derive from the population, industrial capacity and social level of a planet. Both industry and society require spending RPs to develop and maintain standards. However the better the society the higher the population growth which must be supported at higher costs. Growth should thus be limited to what is necessary to man transport ships. In a basic game

```
                         Prod Orders
              Max   Units/RPs                      Sirius
Industry     ( 25)   0     0          Spectral Class : G  Yellow
Social Env   ( 25)   0     0
Planet Env   ( 12)   0     0             Planet # 0
Service Pop  ( 50)  50    50             Class  Primary
PDB Maint    ( 12)  12    12             Owner     1/  *
PDB New      (  5)   0     0               Pop   50/ 90
Colonists    ( 12)   0     0               Ind   15/ 40
Scouts       (  5)   0     0               Env   52/ 75
Mark 1       ( 15)   0     0               Def   12
Mark 2       (  0)
Mark 3       (  0)
Mark 4       (  0)              RPs Lev Next
Ship Tech    (100)   0     0     0 (1)  400              Global RPs:   200
                                                          Planet RPs:    86
                                                                GPP:   140

 Advice Next Planet Prev Planet End Production
```

Decisions on what planets should produce are made

the best tactic is keeping out of trouble, building up an economic base to support a final military burst as the end of the game approaches. In the Advanced Game, however, restrictions on movement make it both slower and more strategic. A number of different strategies are helpfully detailed in the manual for this.

Buoy scouts

During play there are two basic types of turn, which alternate each round. Odd numbered turns allow production and movement to take place, while even numbered turns are movement only. Movement orders are given through a Task Force Control window and all ships must be formed into Task Forces to be moved. Initially scout ships are most important, and as they progress reports are filed detailing aspects of the systems they visit. Both the destinations of scouts and production details can be turned over to the computer if you should wish. Scouts are obviously important for exploration, and their destruction is a useful pointer to the location of enemy fleets. In the Advanced Game, however there are no scouts and strong limitations on industrial capacity. Navigation technologies must be developed, for example, before starships can be much use and special armies developed for invasions. A full save/load function means such games can go on for weeks – if you survive that long.

PC
Diskette: £24.95

The game opens with a great EGA loading screen and basic presentation throughout is first class – for a war game. Unfortunately all the excellent menus seem to present is numbers, no bar charts or icons – this becomes dull. Without any kind of scenario to provide reasons for the warfare and no exciting graphics when a planet is invaded, the game's appeal is strictly limited to enthusiasts. 3.5" disk drive owners will be pleased to learn, however, that in common with all SSG PC games both 3.5" and 5.25" disks are included in the packaging.

OVERALL 62%

OTHER VERSIONS

A Commodore 64/128 version should be available as you read this, disk only, £18.95, and an Amiga version is imminent at £24.95.

"The game's appeal is strictly limited to enthusiasts"

PRESS ANY KEY

CAPTAIN COBRA COURAGEOUS

MARAUDER
Hewson

Design and programming for this arcade shoot-'em-up is credited to **Arcanum Software Developments**, a four-person team led by **Mark Kelly**. It's their first game for Hewson, but follows *Captain Courageous* which was released through English Software.

Long ago, on the heavily defended planet of Mergatron, the stolen jewels of Cymandius were buried at the core of its security systems. That violent and acquisitive civilisation has since fallen, although the rusty defences remain operative. Nevertheless Captain CT Cobra has resolved to recover the jewels in his squat Marauder battlecar.

Cobra's struggle is depicted as a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up with the Marauder fighting its way through the massed Mergatron defences with laser and smart bombs. Enemy weaponry ranges from guns to exotic tanks, from missile launchers to air attacks (launched if the battlecar dallies.) Security beacons perform various functions when shot, dependent on their colour. Extra smart bombs, lives, control reversal, a jammed laser and a life lost are some of the features awarded by the beacons.



Hewson's aim is unsteady in this shoot-'em-up

Hewson has pulled off some neat tricks over the past year by releasing shoot-'em-ups which would be standard if not been for the precision of the game design – best exemplified by Raffaele Cecco's *Exolon* – which made them instantly playable and even uncomfortably addictive. *Marauder* is slick too, but misses being top-notch by several points because, although it's a tough game, there's too much in it that is predictable. In short, nothing new, but a well implemented and demanding challenge.

GLOBAL WAR

DREAM WARRIOR
US Gold

Tarran may sound like a game title, but in fact it is the name of the programming team which has designed this powerfully plotted entertainment. Programmer **Colin Reed**, graphic artist **Stefan Ufnowski** and audio artist **Anthony Lees** make up Tarran. Their previous release for US Gold was *Captain America*, and their third, still in development, is a game about the Cold War, called *Berlin*.

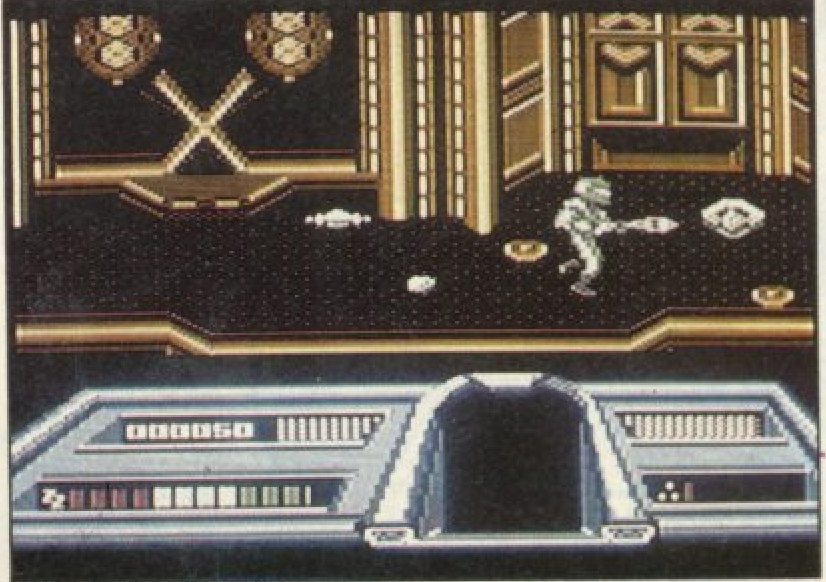
Governments have withered, leaving power in the hands of megacorporations, and the biggest of these is Focus Corp. Its superiority is owed to a weapon which projects dream demons into minds of opponents, sending them insane. Focus has crushed all opposition and overuse of the dream weapon is slowly sending the world psychotic.

Battling to preserve their sanity four astral scientists – or Asmen – have found out how to defeat the dream weapon. Before they could implement countermeasures, however, three were visited by Ocular – the most fearsome of fantasy demons – who imprisoned two in the dream offices of Megabuck Inc and the third on a nightmarish two-headed snake the size of a planetoid. All these phantasms are plagued by demi-demons, guarding the captured Asmen and protecting the black hole through which Ocular can be found. You, the fourth Asman, must rescue your friends and confront Ocular.

Megabuck's offices are long, horizontally scrolling corridors divided into two sublevels of two, each sublevel linked by a lift. Shooting demi-demons releases different coloured globes which have to be quickly picked up before they dematerialise. Blue globes contain psychic images building up a picture of one of your friends – once completed, the friend is released. Other globes release access cards for lifts and safes, the latter restore energy to maximum when opened.

Green globes boost hopper energy so that you can jump from giant demons which appear suddenly, lobbing powerful bombs at you – shoot them to earn a big bonus. Care must be taken to avoid shooting your dream image, though, since awakening it also wakes you – ending the quest.

As soon as sufficient hopper energy is gained, you can jump to the Wyrm planetoid where more demi-demons wait to be shot. In this dream, however, the planetoid can only be reached by walking between the twin snake heads and transforming into a sloop. The sloop must then be flown through alien attack waves back to the hopper. Gravity and the abrupt



On the hunt for demi-demons

dream to dream. While moving through the corridors, various gates halt progress unless floor pads are walked over in the correct pattern – which in practice is relatively simple. Less simple are change of control methods in this stage makes it very difficult. On all levels the dream warrior only has a single life.

Once the psychic images of all your friends have been recovered,

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

More of a tank than a speedy battlecar, the Marauder faces some very finely detailed – and tough – enemies in this unoriginal arcade game. A choice of sound FX or music is useful, although with some brilliant music by Barry Leitch the latter is favoured.

OVERALL 71%

OTHER VERSIONS

Conversions are imminent for Spectrum 48/128: cass £7.99, disk £12.99 and Amstrad CPC: cass £9.99, disk £14.99.

"Nothing new, but a well implemented and demanding challenge"

the black hole must be found so that you can find and destroy Ocular. Each of the demon's six eyes must be blasted to complete the game.

Oddly, despite a novel-sounding scenario and interesting presentation, gameplay is both unoriginal and repetitive. Running left and right shooting things soon becomes tiresome, especially after abruptly dying in the difficult sloop section. Nevertheless the urge to see Ocular might provide a certain addictiveness.

COMMODORE 64/128

Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £11.99

Dream Warrior's presentation is highly polished and very professional; the main figure is nicely animated, background graphics are fair and the sound FX are reasonable, although nothing very special.

OVERALL 51%

OTHER VERSIONS

Conversions are planned for Spectrum, cass: £8.99, Amstrad CPC: cass £9.99, disk: £14.99, and PCs: £19.99.

"Despite a novel-sounding scenario, gameplay is unoriginal and repetitive"

VERSION UPDATE

Arcade psychedelia

BIONIC COMMANDOS

Capcom

Spectrum 48/128: Cassette £8.99, Diskette £14.99 Atari ST: £19.99

OUR feature on page 92 points out that new Capcom coin-ops entering arcades later this year will have simultaneous computer conversions through GO!. Meanwhile, conversion of existing coin-ops continues with the release of the Spectrum and ST versions of *Bionic Commandos*, the all-action arcade game featuring those psychedelic soundtracks reviewed in TGM**007** (Commodore 64/128, 88%.)

Bionic Commandos is a highly playable and generally well-implemented conversion of a great (if not entirely successful) coin-op on both machines.

The ST game begins with some colourful background graphics, small, detailed characters and a speed of action befitting the coin-op. With the advent of the second and third levels, the ST's colours are put to superb use, the rockface, platforms and brick walls really show what can be done with a 16-bit machine. Its tunes, given the lack of effectiveness in the ST's sound chip, are extremely well done, varied, lively and on par with those of the Commodore.

The Spectrum version comes a close second in musical entertainment, while not having the raw power of the Commodore game or the finesse of the ST, there are some excellent tunes. Spectrum characters, platforms and background graphics are limited to one colour, but *Bionic Commandos* remains a pleasant game to look at.

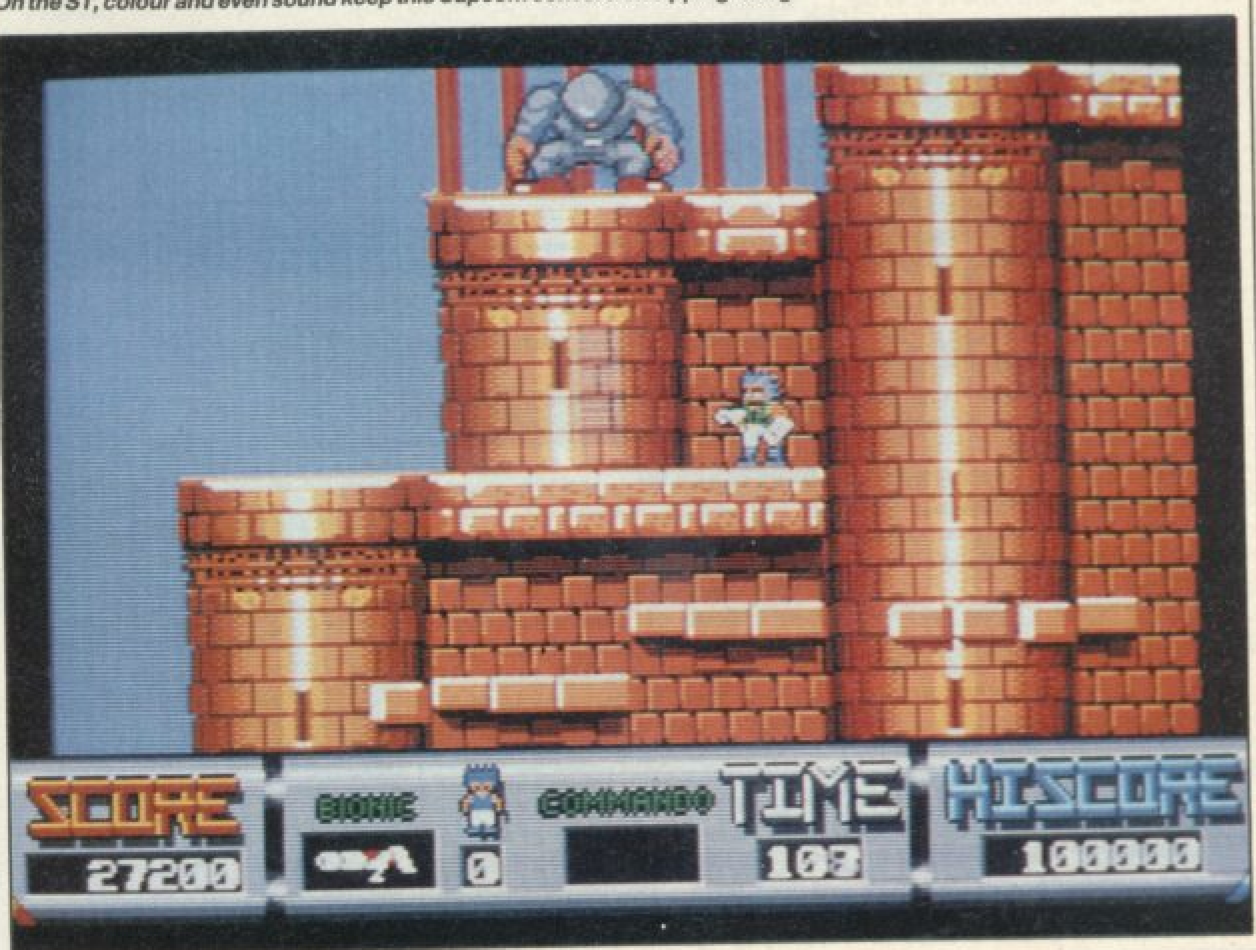
In both versions, gameplay is very similar, with the ST hardest because attacks by guards, birds and other foes are constant. The speed with which the commando moves on the Spectrum (much quicker than on the Commodore) is a definite benefit, resulting in an easier game to play but no less difficult to master. The Commodore's scrolling has been replaced by a flip-screen technique, which, while a little unsettling to look at, doesn't affect gameplay.



The Spectrum's speedy commando acts more bionically than his counterpart

SPECTRUM 48/128: OVERALL 86%
ATARI ST: OVERALL 91%

On the ST, colour and even sound keep this Capcom conversion zipping along



A RISKY TACTIC

The mouse control that roars in world domination

LORDS OF CONQUEST

Eon Software Inc/Electronic Arts

Lords Of Conquest has striking similarities to certain well-known boardgames. **Eon Software**, the designers, have written over 24 games – they created *Cosmic Encounter*, the now-classic boardgame which retails in the UK under the **Games Workshop** banner. The ST version of *Lords Of Conquest* was written by **Thalean Software**.

Lords Of Conquest follows the age-old tradition of warfare in a battle for territory and may be played against up to three players. With territory come the rewards of resources and wealth; from these ultimately come power.

Twenty maps of territories are included although they can also be generated by the computer or designed by the player to recreate conflicts from any era.

Once a map is chosen, the computer randomly distributes the resource-producing centres and cities. Their positions can be changed but initially only one resource is allowed in each region.

The first phase involves each player taking their pick of map regions to control. Regions containing cities or resource centres are generally the first to be picked although, at times, having regions grouped together is better than grabbing all the resource centres. Whichever tactic is employed, players alternately select regions until all have been taken. Each player then places their stockpile in an area initially safe from attack – lose the stockpile and your means of buying resources is lost for that turn.

The development phase is the first in each turn (each turn lasting a year). In this stage, resource points are used to buy boats or weapons or construct cities (construction is most expensive). Situations demand what a player constructs and on higher levels everything becomes much more expensive.

The production phase follows, with the resource totals for all gold, iron, coal and timber sites being added together and sent to the stockpile for use in the development stage. It is at this point that horses appear in pasture areas – adding greatly to military strength when conflict takes place – the number of horses increases as new pastures are created through capturing regions.

The shipment phase is used to prepare players' forces for attack or defence. On the lowest skill levels, only the stockpile may be moved to other locations – primarily a defensive move. The higher levels allow the player to move all forces to regions likely to be attacked or position them for an offensive. Boats can carry horses and weapons from one region to another (provided both have coastlines).

Takeover bids

Conquest follows. When two opposing regions clash, the result of the conflict is determined by weighing up each side's military strength, and the number and power of adjacent countries, as well as adding a chance element – defined at the game's start. A conquered region changes to the victor's colours and any captured weapons, boats, cities or resource centres are added to his stockpile.

For games involving three or four players, the option of trading between players comes into effect. Alliances and temporary collusions can be formed to destroy more powerful opponents or wipe out minor, troublesome, isolated regions. Forming alliances is risky at the best of times and inevitably leads to mistrust and backstabbing.

At the end of a turn, the game can be saved to disk, the colour and background graphics of the screen changed to suit the player's tastes and the speed of the cursor decreased or increased – an effective time-saver.

The game continues until one player has three or more cities under control at the end of a year.

Control is mouse-driven, which makes the game easy to use and operate; likewise the construction kit is simple but effective and opens up the game, expanding its long-term appeal. As well as four skill levels, handicaps can be placed on individual players (or the computer opponent) providing further variations in strategic play.

Lords Of Conquest uses some powerful strategy elements. The computer opponent starts as a relatively passive opponent at beginner level, increasing in strength with higher difficulty levels. The gameplay is not over-sophisticated but the computer opponent's toughness and the unpredictability of other human players make it a challenging game.

The strategy idea is age-old, drawing on ideas from boardgames such as *Risk* and *Diplomacy* and, to a certain extent, *Othello*. Nevertheless, it's good to see this type of classical strategy game on the Atari ST.

OTHER VERSIONS

It's already available on the Commodore 64/128 priced at £9.95 cassette and £12.95 disk. Electronic Arts are considering importing an Apple II version but have no release dates or prices as yet.

"Not too sophisticated but toughness and unpredictability make it challenging"

ATARI ST Diskette: £19.95

The graphics are simple and mostly crude. Sound is likewise simplistic and it adds nothing to play. Lords Of Conquest **doesn't use the ST's potential at all – the graphics are old-fashioned and it all looks more like an 8-bit wargame from SSI. Fortunately, it's the strategy that counts and this game certainly provides enough of that.**

OVERALL 73%

VERSION UPDATE

BUGGY BOY

Elite Systems

Amiga: £24.99

ALREADY available on the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Commodore 64/128, Elite's conversions of Taito's fun *Baja Bug* racing game conclude with the Amiga version. The buggy is smaller than its ST counterpart, having a very slightly squashed appearance.

The sound effects are surprisingly poor, just the title tune, noise of the engine and a musical interlude when collecting bonus flags. The high degree of playability that existed on other versions is still present – but without effective sound it's not as entertaining as the ST game.

AMIGA: OVERALL 77%



Strong but silent: the squashed buggy in its final 16-bit conversion

RETURN OF INVADERS FROM OUTER SPACE

BETTER DEAD THAN ALIEN

Electra

This decidedly comic release marks the establishment of a brand-new publishing house, although the primary programmers – **Oxford Digital Enterprises** – are well-known for such games as Domark's *Trivial Pursuit* and Grandslam Entertainments's *The Hunt For Red October.*

As chronicled by the *Better Dead Than Alien* comic, brave adventurer Brad Zoom has spent four years travelling through space in his rocketship Argo. Finally on April 1 1954 the Argo touched down on Mars. Contrary to Brad's expectations, Mars turns out to be warm, and when he takes off his helmet he finds the atmosphere strangely congenial.

Unfortunately before Brad relays this fantastic information to Earth he comes under unprovoked attack by hordes of aliens. Brad naturally replies with his trusty laser rifle before legging it to his rocketship. The Argo's engine lights first go, but once in space Brad finds he has been followed by the foul aliens. If he's ever to see Earth again, Brad must blast his way through wave after wave of attackers in a distinctly *Space Invaders* type escapade.

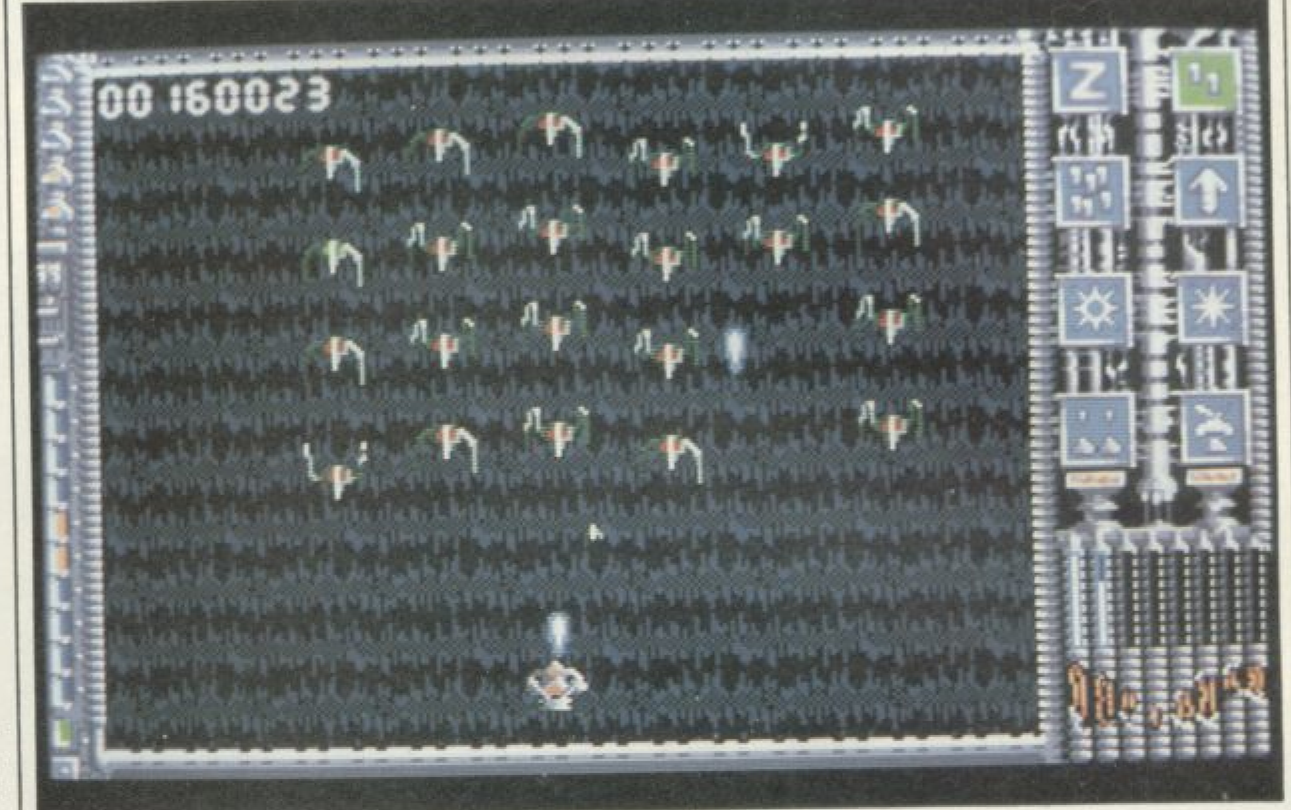
Blast asteroids

Brad's spaceship is, but for asteroid attacks, confined to the lower quarter of the screen while row after row of aliens slowly descend toward it, taking occasional potshots. Unlike conventional *Space Invaders* however, when the aliens reach the bottom of the screen they loop around to attack again. At certain stages during the mayhem one of the aliens may glow green and, if shot, a canister is released. Should the Argo be in a position to pick it up, special powers are bestowed, a shield, multiple lasers, double-ship, armour-piercing missile, neutron bomb and alien stun are all available to aid Brad's escape. Unfortunately these special weapons only last for the current level.

Canisters are particularly hard to pick up on asteroid sections when the ship can move across the whole screen, as large space-rocks drift by. Shooting asteroids splits them into smaller and smaller pieces, filling the screen with debris until they can finally be destroyed. Regardless of level, asteroid sections are tough.

Should you successfully fight through three levels of aliens, a codeword is given allowing access to higher levels whenever you want. In a less well thought-out game the passwords might make the game too easy, *Better Dead Than Alien* avoids this by incorporating a steady increase in difficulty and by making the last level particularly tough with a special monster to defeat. Since the enemy attack does not increase with two players on screen, you may find yourself asking a friend to come round and help defeat all 75 levels.

While this is an unashamed *Space Invaders* clone, great presentation, addictive gameplay and an infectious sense of humour set it apart. The main reservation is that it might lead to a *Breakout*-type onslaught of *Space Invaders* imitators descending on the unsuspecting ranks of computer gamers.



Unconventional space invaders . . . good Lord, man, will they stop at nothing? ST



Bang bang, argh, ha ha . . . with FX Brad may be better off deaf – Amiga

AMIGA
Diskette: £19.95

Backdrop scrolling is jerky, control response is distinctly sluggish but gameplay remains highly addictive due to the great password system. The Amiga's superior sonic capability is exploited with an 'argh' every time the Argo is hit, and generally very good sound FX throughout.

OVERALL 81%

OTHER VERSIONS

No other versions planned.

ATARI ST Diskette: £19.95

The ST has speedier background scrolling, although a little jerky, while control response is better. Nevertheless since the aliens move faster too, this version is tougher thán on the Amiga. Sound FX are not quite up to Amiga quality, but a poor performance is still met by digitised laughter – and a good one by applause.

OVERALL 83%

"Great presentation, addictive gameplay and an infectious sense of humour"

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AT THE PERSONAL COMPUTER SHOW

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IT IS. RYU?

STREET FIGHTER
Capcom/GO!

Street Fighter is the latest in a series of ten **Capcom** coin-ops to be converted for all the major machines by GO!. All the versions have been programmed by Tiertex.

You are Ryu, a fighter highly skilled in martial arts, and as such are pitted against an international array of dangerous opponents. Two adversaries must be defeated in each of the nations visited – the world tour begins in Japan and each country constitutes a load from tape or disk. The bouts involve large figures battling it out against a suitably atmospheric, scrolling backdrop – Pagodas, Mountains and Cityscapes

Each match consists of three timed rounds in which the two fighters punch and kick their opponent in an attempt to reduce his energy.

Ryu has a multitude of moves at his disposal including jumps and somersaults. All are accessed via the joystick in the usual beat-'em-up style – using combinations of directions with or without the fire-button. However, success can usually be achieved by using just one or two moves which unfortunately leads to repetitive gameplay.



Best 8-bit graphics – Amstrad CPC



Knocking things down in the land of the rising sun – Commodore 64

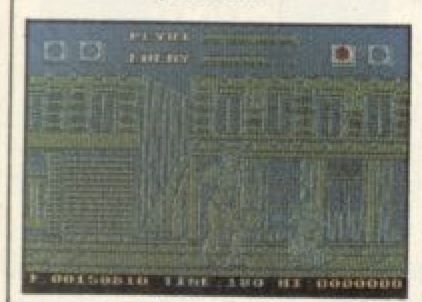
Come flail with me

Some of Ryu's more vicious opponents are equipped with death stars and rice flails which can cause horrific injuries.

If either fighter's energy is reduced to zero he is knocked out and loses the round; otherwise the one with the most energy at the end of the round wins. Whichever fighter is successful in two out of the three rounds wins the match. If Ryu wins a round by a knockout he scores bonus points for the amount of time and energy remaining. He is permitted to lose three matches before the game ends. If he manages to defeat two opponents he has a chance to score extra points in the bonus round where he must smash as many bricks as he can with his bare hands. Ryu subsequently travels to the next country where two fresh opponents are waiting to do him harm.

Street Fighter includes a two-player option in which players contest an initial match between Ryu and Ken, the winner going on to fight the computer opponents.

Keeping violence on the streets – Spectrum



AMSTRAD CPC Cassette: £9.99, Diskette: £14.99

Graphically the best of the 8-bit conversions, it manages to combine the detail of the Spectrum game's graphics with the colour on the Commodore version. Gameplay is very similar to other versions although progress is made more difficult by the greater intelligence of opponents. Even lacking the Commodore music it is still the most playable of the three.

OVERALL 73%

SPECTRUM 48/128 Cassette: £8.99, Diskette: £12.99

Although the graphics are entirely monochromatic, the backdrops are well drawn and the large characters move well. Playability is limited with repetitive gameplay and many of Ryu's moves are not needed to win. Sound is also weak with just white noise spot effects, not even a title tune.

OVERALL 60%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

This features both the British and American versions. The former sacrifices detail for colour and the sprites are very blocky. Progress is as easy as on the Spectrum with similar, repetitive gameplay. One enhancement is the addition of a good in-game tune which creates a good atmosphere. Gameplay in the American version is virtually identical, featuring the same lack of challenge.

OVERALL 65%

OTHER VERSIONS

An Amiga and Atari ST version should be out by the time you read this, priced £24.99 and £19.99 respectively

"Success can be achieved by one or two moves which leads to repetitive gameplay"

A RIDE DOWN SKID ROLL

SKATE CRAZY
Gremlin Graphics

Roller-skating, according to Gremlin, is now the only way to show how 'def' you are. But when you, and a couple of friends, set up a challenge in a disused car to seriously improve your street cred, too many crashes and you hear your defness called into question. The Commodore 64 development team is no less than eight people, including **Greg Holmes** (*Jack The Nipper 1/2*) and **Ben Daglish**. Spectrum programming is by **Tony Porter** (*The Eidolon* and *MASK*) with graphics by **Kevin Bulmer** (*Gauntlet II*).

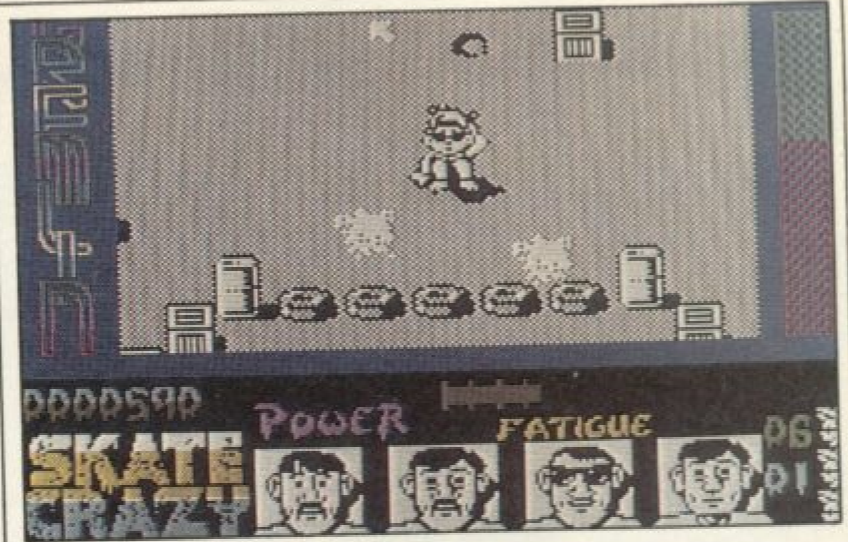
The main game takes part in the multistorey car park where each level has been laid out with cones, flags, jumps and hurdles, represented by an eight-way scrolling, overhead view. There are numerous non-regulation hazards such as oil spills, potholes, remote-control cars, other skaters and sand. The objective is to get around the course in the shortest possible time, with the minimum of crashes, while executing enough stunts to impress the four judges.

Once you arrive at the finishing point the judges hold up score cards which determine whether you must retake the course or not. If you succeed in qualifying, you have a choice between going up to the next floor of the car park challenge or taking the championship course. The latter entails a long multiload for what is effectively another game. On the Commodore only there's a rubbish collection section, so that if you fail to qualify for round one, you must collect all the rubbish before time runs out to go forward to round two.

Championship

The championship course is a horizontally-scrolling race against the clock with a great many pits to be jumped, and scaffolding to be ducked under. Waggling the joystick left/right builds up speed, but it can be tricky unless the skater's direction has been firmly established. If you complete a championship course you may go on to the next level, or return to the car park challenge.

Both sections have four levels and all eight must be completed to finish the game. On the championship section the levels are building site, park, London Underground and a street scene.



Better cred than dead – Spectrum

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £7.99
Diskette: £12.99

The multidirectional scrolling on the car park is very smooth, and although in monochrome, detail is excellent. By way of contrast the championship section is a lot more colourful, but an irritating control method makes it just as tough as the frustrating car park level.

OVERALL 78%

COMMODORE 64/128
Cassette: £9.99
Diskette: £14.99

It looks great, with a colourful car park section and some brilliant parallax scrolling on Level 2 of the championship section. Sound FX are generally good, although the screech of skids becomes irritating. It certainly has graphic appeal, but gameplay is exceptionally tough and frustration soon builds up.

OVERALL 78%

OTHER VERSIONS

Too late for a full review, an Amstrad version should be available as you read this, cass: £9.99, disk: £14.99.

"It has graphic appeal, but gameplay is tough and frustration builds up"

VERSION UPDATE

Back to an old dimension

DARK SIDE
Incentive

Commodore 64/128 Cassette: £9.99, Diskette: £14.99

LAGGING, perhaps appropriately, a month behind the other 8-bit releases (TGM**008**, 93% Amstrad CPC and Spectrum) comes the Commodore game, struggling manfully with the hardware. Your objective in this sequel to the acclaimed *Driller* is to disable a powerful weapon – Zephyr One – based on Tricuspid, a moon of Evath. Equipped only with a laser gun and fuel-hungry jetpack you must set about exploring the moon's 18 sectors, disabling energy collecting devices (ECDs).

Unfortunately if one ECD is connected to two or more active ECDs, it can't be deactivated, so disabling the network requires thought. In addition there are the 3-D puzzles to contend with which made the original so intriguing. Fortunately a save/load function eliminates a lot of unnecesssary repetition while a measure of arcade action is provided by the lasers of tank-like defences.

As with the other versions, *Dark Side* provides a virtually unique opportunity to explore a totally solid 3-D world. That said, the Commodore version is slow – frustrating if you don't have the patience for it. However, the depth and imagination of the game, combined with an excellent sound track, is likely to provide some quite compulsive entertainment.



Another side of Freescape's force: the 3-D technique is still solid

COMMODORE 64/128:
OVERALL 90%

OFF WITH HIS/HER HEAD

BARBARIAN II, THE DUNGEONS OF DRAX

Palace Software

As with the original *Barbarian*, the game's design and concept originated with non-programmer **Steve Brown**, a top graphic artist with Palace. **Richard Joseph** is responsible for the atmospheric soundtrack while **Mike Van Wyjk** and **Maria Whittaker** ensure, once more, that the packaging stands out from the crowd.

Having fought his way through all Drax's powerful champions, seeming to destroy Drax himself and rescuing the grateful Princess Mariana, our Barbarian hero might have thought his lifestyle would become a little less barbaric. Unfortunately, as with all truly evil sorcerers, Drax has proved difficult to defeat. Risen from the ashes of his corpse, he has fled to the deepest dungeons of his black castle, determined to avenge himself on the Jewelled Kingdom – and more specifically the Barbarian and Mariana.

Rather than passively await Drax's vengeance, the Barbarian and Mariana decide to destroy the evil sorcerer in his lair. Princess Mariana, it turns out, far from being merely a royal bimbo, is an exceptionally gifted fighter. In the multiload game you can choose to play either character, both are well-armed; the Barbarian carrying a battle-axe and the princess a sword. Either character is capable of a wide variety of combat moves necessary to avoid injury. Energy is displayed in the top right-hand corner of the screen and when at zero, one of five lives are lost.

Shock horrors

To confront and kill Drax a warrior must fight through three multiloaded levels before finally entering the fourth level – the Sanctum of Drax. Each of the first three levels is defended by six different types of monster. To fully explore the 28-screen maze which makes up each level, great timing and tactics are required. On Level 1, The Wastelands, opponents range from apes to Neanderthal men to horrific dinosaurs which can effortlessly bite off a person's head.

The caverns provide an equally tough challenge with orcs, crabs and trolls, while the dungeons contain massive dungeon masters who appear expert in Thai Boxing. Each monster has its own energy level which can be diminished by well-judged blows, although the best move is a decapitation stroke – if you get a chance.

Skill with the sword or axe alone will not bring victory, however, there are two magical objects on each level which must be found to survive later levels. An axe increases strength, for example, while a shield prevents instant death from the demon's fire. Once collected, objects are displayed at the bottom of the screen beside a sword which acts as a compass – always pointing North.

While exploring the *The Dungeons Of Drax* it's advisable to watch for pits – and jump over them. Should you land on the rim then frantic joystick-waggling is needed to regain balance. Some pits, however, have monsters inside which gobble up unwary adventurers. The neatly picked bones they subsequently spit out show the great attention to detail which makes this such an attractive and playable game.

After playing what seems like hundreds of unremarkable 8-bit games it's astonishing to find a game which can shock, not simply through the black humour of dinosaurs biting peoples' heads off, but in the superbly drawn and animated opponents. From the quick-waddling dinosaur creature to the living idol on Level Four, the monsters constantly amaze.

Barbarian may get a buzz out of this demonic creature if he's slow with his axe arm

COMMODORE 64/128 Cassette: £9.99, Diskette: £14.99

Combat, it has to be said, isn't quite on the same level as on the original game, but this is more than compensated for by the range of opponents, all of which have their own attack patterns. This is a brilliant arcade/adventure on disk and although we haven't played the cassette version yet, each level seems substantial enough to make multiload a very minor irritation.

OVERALL 94%

A mammoth task lies ahead of our barbaric hero – he'll need all the aggression he can muster to get through to the final conflict with Drax



OTHER VERSIONS

Conversions are expected for the Amstrad, Spectrum, Atari ST and Amiga. 16-bit versions may take longer than the others but hopefully they'll make as full use of the machines as the CBM 64 game - unlike Barbarian I.

"A game which can shock in the superbly drawn and animated opponents"

BOARD OF THE RINGS

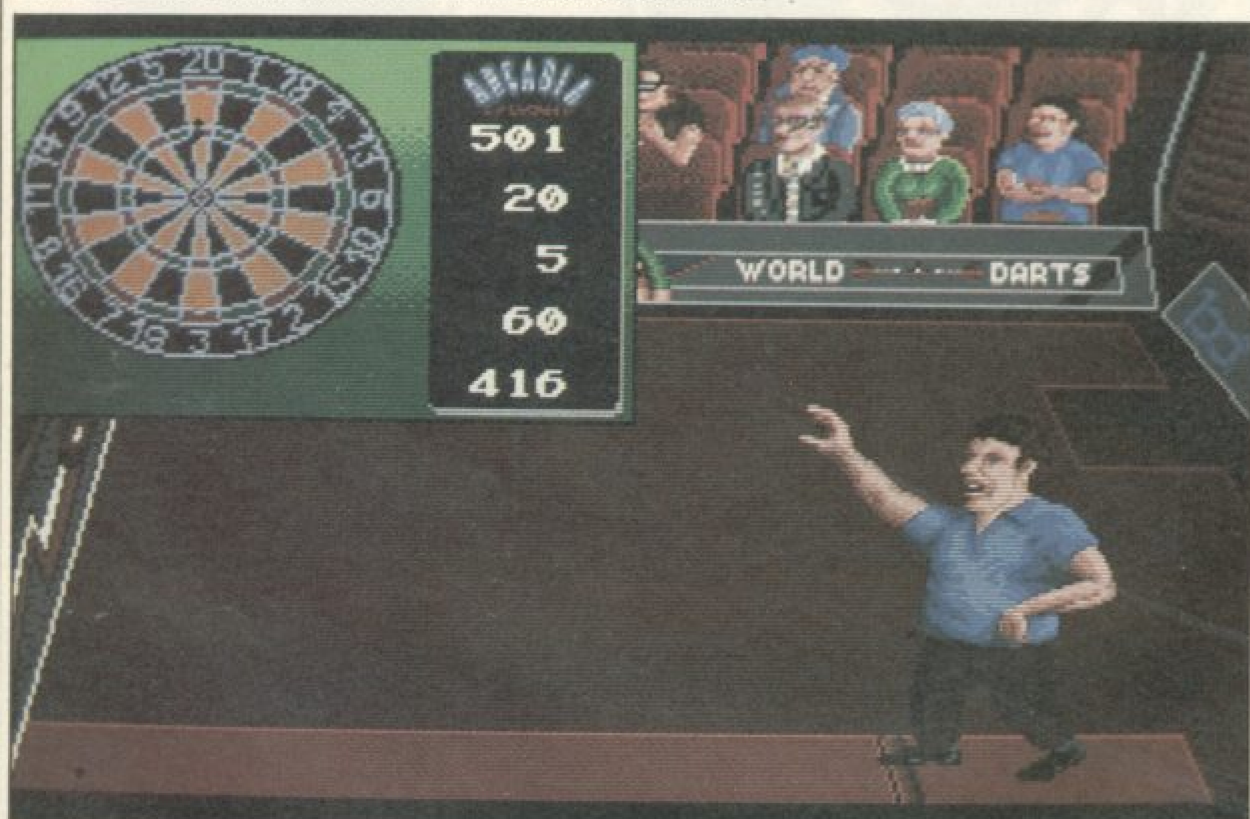
WORLD DARTS
Mastertronic

Just in time for Christmas 1986 Mastertronic released a highly successful Spectrum darts game called *180* by **Binary Design**. When Mastertronic put together their Amiga-based arcade game *Sport Simulation* they had an Arcadia version of *180* included as *World Darts*. Now, two years later, the game is again being released for home computers – this time with arcade-quality graphics and sound.

This famous pub-playing game has been converted to the home computer in full world championship form with eight opponents. Play begins at the quarter-final stage of the championship with just three games to become champion. Alternatively you can enter the final direct for a two-player competition. Games are played in a series of legs, in each of which the objective is to be the first to score exactly 501 points. The board is divided into 20 segments, with a double-score ring on the outside, a treble-ring half way in and a bullseye offering 25 or 50 points depending on accuracy. To make things harder, the last score must be a double. Players take turns of three throws to work toward 501, and at the start of each turn an announcer calls out who is to throw.

180
During play a disembodied hand wanders across the board with dart in hand. The hand is only partially controlled by joystick, so the skill is in guiding it into the area you want to hit and pressing fire at just the right moment. Difficult to begin with, especially with a time limit, after some practice treble-twenties shouldn't be too difficult. During one-player games your opponent is shown inside a darts hall making his three throws; while he doesn't take long at all, the disk access is a bit irritating. A wealth of options such as 99 not very different skill levels, up to 15 legs per match and a box suggesting what you should aim for, indicate some thought has gone into it, but ultimately the repetitiveness of the action may prove inescapable.

Disk access on every turn makes the local's old dartsmen seem hurried



AMIGA
Diskette: £9.99

The bane of the Amiga turns up again here with disk accessing required before each turn, yet even during two-player games no extra graphics are required. Graphics are generally very good, but never astounding. Sound FX are similarly professional with a superb, Northern-accented digitised voice announcing whose turn it is. A good game of darts, but the Spectrum version made better use of the machine.

OVERALL 55%

OTHER VERSIONS

No plans for any other versions.

"Some thought has gone into it, but repetitiveness of action may prove inescapable"

VERSION UPDATE

ALTERNATIVE WORLD GAMES
Gremlin Graphics

Spectrum 48/128: £7.99

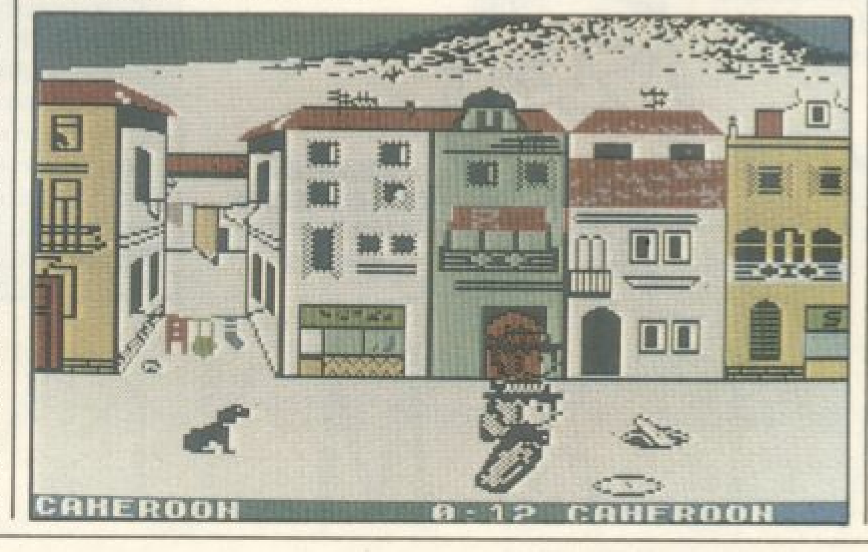
HERE we have a sports simulation with tongue firmly planted in its cheek. The player is encouraged to compete in such wacky events as sack racing in Naples, boot throwing in the Colosseum, pole climbing in Verona, and running up the walls of Venice.

Once the competitor's identity and country of origin have been established, they are faced with a bank of nine video monitors. Using the joystick each monitor can then be accessed in turn to demonstrate a game. When the player has decided which game to attempt, switching to the ninth monitor gives the option to either practice or compete in their chosen event.

If in practice mode, at the end of the race you are asked whether or not you wish to continue practising, in compete mode a score card is displayed, you can then chart your success. As **Alternative World Games** is multiload, it's best to attempt the events in sequence; manual positioning of the tape is possible, but is frustrating, and ultimately time consuming.

Graphically **Alternative World Games** is good, with nicely animated sprites bounding around the solid, colourful backdrops. Overall a playable alternative sports game that's fun, but thankfully does not tax the joystick as much as some games of this ilk.

Sack racing in Italy is Pasta joke



SPECTRUM:
OVERALL 79%



ALL THIS AND BARBARIANS TOO

ANNALS OF ROME

PSS

Like the Amiga version of *Power Struggle*, *Annals Of Rome* is another conversion of a PSS strategy game already available on the 8-bit machines. Further conversions are planned for *Battlefield Germany*, *Firezone*, *Final Frontier* and *Fortress America*. *Annals Of Rome* was designed by **Dr George Jaroskiewitz**, an expert on Rome.

Take command of what was once the greatest Empire in the known world, the Roman Civilisation, spread its influence through Europe and avoid the inevitable collapse and sacking by the barbarians around the continent.

The main display is taken up by a map of the European continent made up of 28 regions with the heart of the Empire – Italy – taking centre stage.

At the start of the turn, your position can be saved to disk, a new game started or old game loaded in. The first phase in the turn is to set up an economic plan. A tax rate must be set up for the turn, increasing the treasury coffers – this also leads to inflation and lack of popularity.

The personnel phase follows with 21 commanders controlling the military forces of the Empire. Each officer has a loyalty and ability rating and a ranking from Senator up to Commander level. Commanders have an army. As each turn is up to 25 years in length, officers come and go.



Trust and loyalty are secondary to gaining power in the Roman Empire. If the leadership is unpopular, rebellion occurs throughout the ranks; commanding officers and their armies may even march on Rome itself to try and establish a dictatorship of their own. Armies bribed to remain loyal to the Emperor proves costly for the treasury.

Civil wars can erupt, officers starting rebellions against the Empire if the régime's popularity is low. Rebels and Loyalists to the Empire fight amongst each other. Rebel victories can pave the way to the conquest of Rome itself, drawn out civil wars lead to large scale unpopularity and a greater chance of rebellion in the further regions. If a rebel army reaches Rome, the leader takes over as Ruler of Rome. A new popularity rating is given and play continues but under new imperial leaders. Control can be changed by initiating further civil war although the resulting change could be for the worse. Following civil wars comes the final phase of foreign wars.

Around the European continent lie the barbarians: Gauls, Carthaginians, Macedonians, Celts, Goths, Numidians and more, all intent on seeing Rome burn and their own territories expand. While the Roman Empire grows, the barbarians also take control of countries, move their forces and fight battles. While not a collective band fighting as one against the Romans, the barbarians are a formidable threat because of their sheer numbers.

Annals Of Rome certainly provokes thought and questions, particularly as to how Rome survived so long with the threat of barbarian attacks all around. Considering the game's potential depth, player interaction is limited. At times the player watches the action unfold and can do nothing. Disappointing, considering the Amiga potential.

SPECTRUM 48/128 Cassette: £9.95, Diskette: £14.95

The vector graphics featured in Star Wars **are very much in evidence, their standard competes against the best of the genre:** 3-D Starstrike **and** Starglider. **Fast moving and colourful sprites scroll smoothly around the screen and animation is good, especially of the AT-ATs.**

OVERALL 87%

OTHER VERSIONS

Already available for Commodore 64/128 and Amstrad CPC, cass: £12.99, disk: £17.99, Spectrum 48/128, cass: £12.99, Atari ST and PC: £24.99.

"Disappointing, considering the Amiga potential"

LUKE'S VADER FIGURE



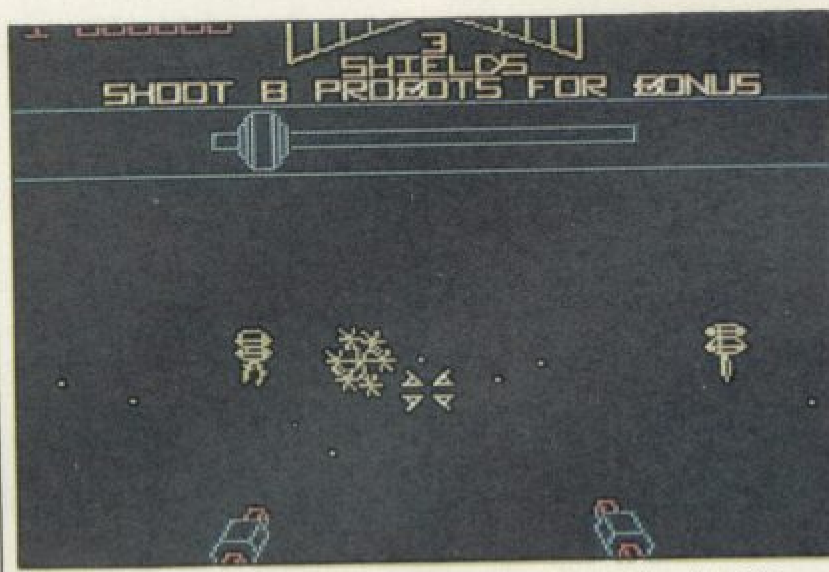
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Domark

The Empire Strikes Back is the second game in the *Star Wars* trilogy to be written by **George Iwanow (Vektor Graphix)** and released by Domark. Split into four parts, it charts the rebels' flight for survival from the inhospitable ice planet, Hoth. After the destruction of the Imperial Death Star, Lord Vader is alive, well and bent on revenge.

The first part of the game has you in the role of Luke Skywalker skimming across the frozen wastes of Hoth in your snow speeder. Your task is to destroy the many probots sent out by the Empire to find the rebel base and transmit its location.

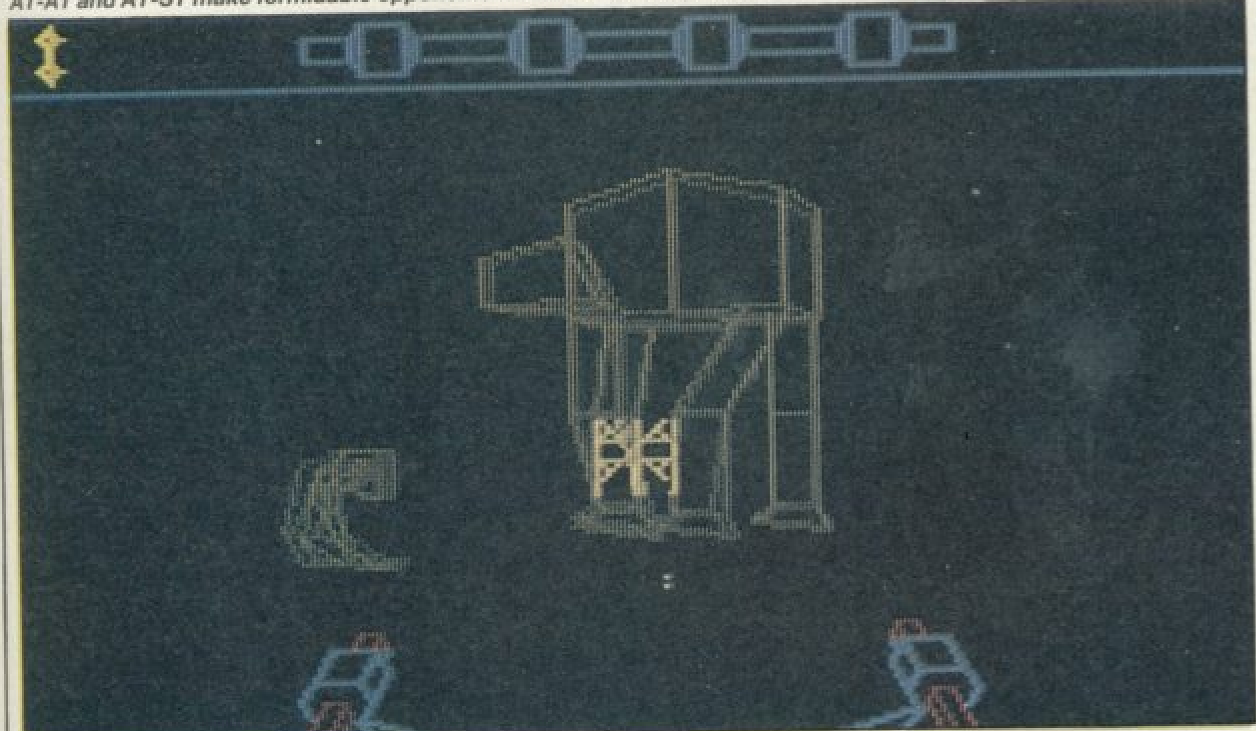
As well as the probots, their message pods must also be stopped. The robotic spys are not going to hover around whilst you shoot at them – they fire back. You start the game with five shields, which are depleted every time a fireball hits the snow speeder's fragile hull. Success awards entry to the next level and larger foes in the shape of AT-ATs (All-Terrain Armoured Transport), and their smaller but faster companions the AT-ST Walkers (All-Terrain Scout Transport).



Battling against the Empire's probots – let's hope it doesn't end in a TIE

Again Luke is seated in his craft, this time his mission is to defeat the AT-ATs by firing tow cables at their legs (effectively tripping them up) or repeatedly shooting their heads. The AT-STs are fast – shoot the fireballs they spew out before blasting them.

AT-AT and AT-ST make formidable opponents for Luke's snow speeder



Where it's at at

The third section gives Luke Skywalker a break and involves the swashbuckling hero, Han Solo, onboard the Millenium Falcon. TIE fighters and their fireballs have to be shot or avoided as you escape from Empire. If this screen is successfully negotiated, the fourth and final game is entered. Han and friends have escaped from the clutches of the Empire, only to run into a deadly asteroid field. Only the pilot's skill can guide them through the hail of space-rocks and on to the safety of a large asteroid.

During the game, point bonuses can be scored by shooting a specified number of enemy craft or letters of the alphabet. If the letters J-E-D-I are hit in sequence, you are rewarded with limited invincibility. A useful weapon when up against the might of the Empire.

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette: £9.95
Diskette: £14.95

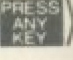
The vector graphics featured in Star Wars **are very much in evidence, their standard competes against the best of the genre:** 3-D Starstrike **and** Starglider. **Fast moving and colourful sprites scroll smoothly around the screen. Animation is good, especially of the AT-ATs.**

OVERALL 87%

OTHER VERSIONS

During the first week of July, versions will be released for the Commodore 64/128: cass £9.95, disk £12.95 and the Amstrad CPC: cass £9.95, disk £14.95. An Atari ST and Amiga version will be released in the third week of July, both retailing at £19.95

"Competes against the best of the genre"



MATCH PLAY

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
Microdeal

Microdeal had some problems with their latest 16-bit football game. First versions sent out had the computer opponent doing most peculiar things, including kicking home goals and running off the pitch at every opportunity. This has now been rectified and readers who may have purchased the bugged game can return it to Microdeal's Freepost address and receive the second version free of charge. *International Soccer* was created by the familiar duo of programmer **Ed Scio** and graphics artist **Pete Lyons**

The sport of football has been covered often on home computers, and Microdeal's *International Soccer* continues the trend. From the main screen, most of the standard football options are available, including alternating the length of each half (from five to 45 minutes), choosing night or day to play, the strength of the wind, the surface of the pitch (wet or dry), team colours and any of five team formations.

Not falling foul

International Soccer plays like a standard football game, with 22 players spilling out onto the pitch – the player currently under your control is highlighted by a symbol under his feet. The nearest team-member to the ball is defaulted to be controlled although this can be over-ridden (the goalkeeper is under direct player control as well, adding an extra element of fun to the game.) A small problem encountered with the manual selection method is that cycling through each player takes up valuable time while the ball runs loose.

The game features corners, goal kicks, penalties, throw-ins, fouls and tackles as well as a whistle-happy linesman pacing up and down the side of the pitch. Nine skill levels are built into the game, although the computer opponent is difficult across the board. On screen, there's no score board or indicator level for the amount of power put into a kick, as such, medium power shots are difficult to achieve and it's easy to under- or over-emphasis a kick.

International Soccer is certainly the best football game on the ST yet, in direct competition with the Grandslam game, it succeeds because it not only provides a variety of football options but it keeps the pace of the game going. ST owners unfortunately still haven't got anything in the *Match Day II* league but *International Soccer* is a good substitute.

ATARI ST Diskette: £19.95

International Soccer **has all the elements of a good soccer game, continuous action, fast and smooth-flowing gameplay. In the background the crowd get into the swing of things doing the 'Mexican wave' in time to one of the five tunes accompanying play.**

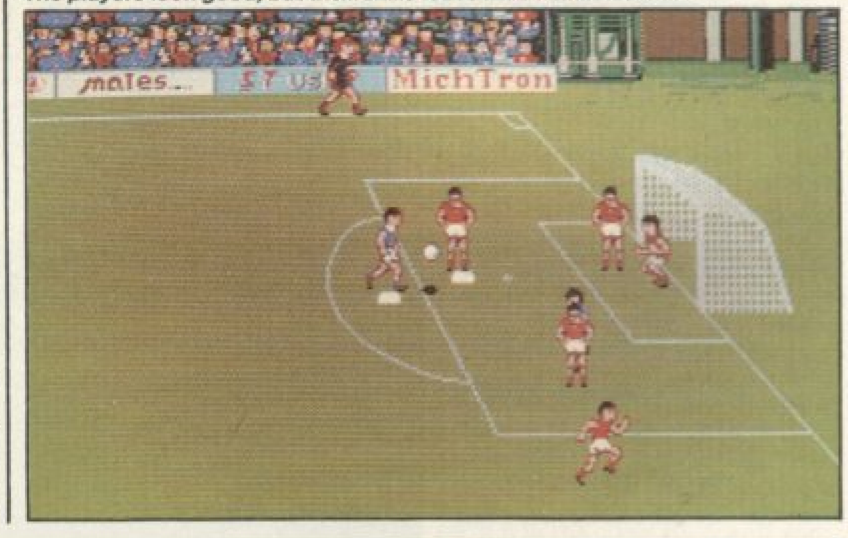
OVERALL 78%

OTHER VERSIONS

An Amiga version is planned priced at £19.95

"Continuous action, fast and smooth flowing gameplay"

The players look good, but their skills leave much to be desired



VERSION UPDATE

ARCTICFOX
Electronic Arts

Spectrum 48/128: Cassette £8.95

DYNAMIX, the people behind *Skyfox II* (reviewed in this issue on the PC) are the team responsible for *ArcticFox* in its original Commodore 64 form, then released through the now-defunct Ariolasoft at the beginning of 1987. It's taken a year for the Z80 version to surface with **Mark Fisher** of Comtec being responsible for the translation.

The ArcticFox of the title is a massive tank patrolling the icy wastelands around the Arctic Circle. An alien attack force has landed near the North Pole intent on reclimatising Earth's atmosphere to convert it into a deadly alien environment. ArcticFox is the only military hardware in the vicinity which can stop the process.

Using a first-person 3-D view, the commander moves the tank around the region, climbing hills, negotiating crevasses and destroying the alien force's light and heavy tanks in a style similar to *Battlezone*. Reconnaissance aircraft and sleds patrol, looking for ArcticFox, reporting its position to the communications fort in preparation for attacks by fighters. Rocket launchers are also sited at key points in the vast region, guarding not only the vital air converters but radar stations and the alien base itself – the Main Fort.

ArcticFox has at its disposal guided missiles which can be flown in the now familiar *Starglider* style, cannon shells and antitank mines. If it all gets too dangerous, the tank can dig in and hide under the snow, although resurfacing at the wrong moment can often lead to fatal results. The game ends if ArcticFox is destroyed or the Earth's oxygen level reaches zero.

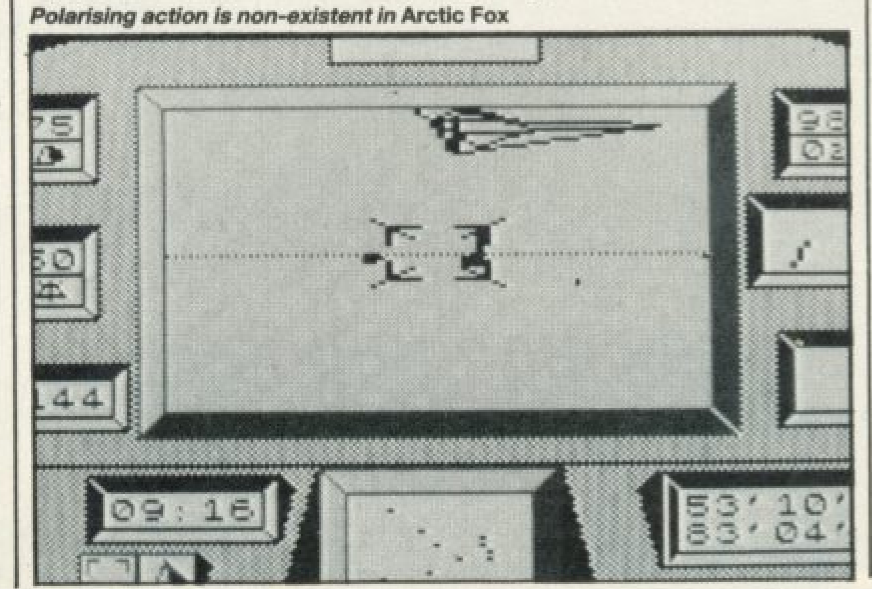
The original Commodore 64 *ArcticFox* had a speed which crippled any lasting appeal or gameplay. This should have been rectified with the Spectrum version but in many ways the game has become worse. The multiload is still there on the 48K version proving an inevitable burden, there's an all-in-one load for the 128K version, but the lack of any sound whatsoever in either is a severe drawback to say the least.

Colour is ill-used, with nothing more than light blue and grey to create the effect of travelling through a polar landscape. Graphics are primitive wireframe shapes moving past, and while movement is faster than on the Commodore game, at times the graphics look confused in appearance as the computer desperately tries to maintain perspective, not always succeeding.

The lack of varying scenery, together with the long periods of inactivity between conflicts, only highlights the limited gameplay. This said, there's some atmosphere to the game, sneaking over a hill and observing a target in the distance guarded by rocket launchers and tanks brings forth tension and excitement quickly mounts. Unfortunately, it soon falls back into the depths of tedium once the target is eliminated and you are faced with the prospect of another long haul across the frozen wastes. *ArcticFox* is not a very successful format conversion of a not very exciting game.

SPECTRUM 48/128: OVERALL 46%

Polarising action is non-existent in **Arctic Fox**



STREET FIGHTER™

....NOTHING STANDS IN YOUR WAY

Screen shot from Spectrum version.

Screen shot from Amstrad version.

Screen shot from CBM 64/128 version.

Screen shot from Atari ST version.



EXPLOSIVE COIN-OP ACTION!

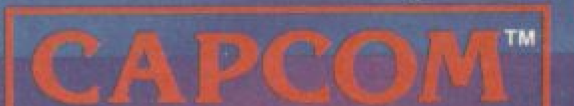
Battle your way across the globe taking on the mighty fighting power of 10 awesome exponents of hand to hand combat.

"A SINCLAIR CLASSIC"

"Thoroughly impressive combat game which knocks Renegade for 6. Go damage someone." Sinclair User

"It's fast, good looking and well hard" Your Sinclair

CBM 64/128 **£9.99**t – **£14.99**d
Spectrum 48K **£8.99**t
Spectrum +3 **£12.99**d
Amstrad **£9.99**t – **£14.99**d
Atari ST **£19.99**d Amiga **£24.99**d



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RODENT CONTROL

MICKEY MOUSE
Gremlin Graphics

With *Basil The Great Mouse Detective* under their belts, this makes Gremlin's second Disney game. Both licences have been programmed by **Gaz Priest**

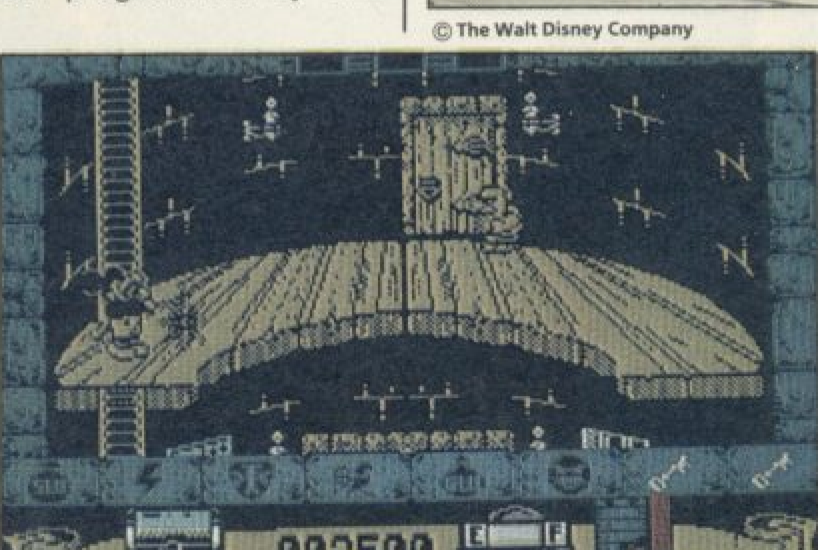
Mickey's binary adventure takes place in the famous Disney castle which has been taken over by four witches. Serving the evil whims of the Ogre King, the witches have used Merlin's wand to cast a foul spell – enslaving the surrounding lands – then broken the wand to make the spell indestructible. Each of the witches holds a piece of the wand and resides in one of the castle's four towers. To defend themselves from attack the witches have stolen all but one flagon of enchanted water and with it created a horde of evil ghosts.

The only thing that can destroy these monsters is a spray of enchanted water, reducing to the vial of liquid they once were. Merlin has given our hero mouse the last of his water and after loading his water pistol, Mickey sets off to defeat the Ogre King. Ghostly guardians can materialise from anywhere, so Mickey must be quick with his gun, and watch out for the King's ogres as well. Ogres are invulnerable to water, but the hammer Mickey carries with him can defeat the normal ones with a single blow, or smash big ogres into two smaller ones. Some of these monsters leave spells for Mickey to collect such as a mask (makes monsters run away) and glue (sticks the monsters to the floor.)

Occasionally however a hostile spell is released which chases Mickey. If spells or monsters catch Mickey they drain his water pistol – once it's empty he must abandon his quest. Collecting the water vials left by some creatures, however, can refill the gun.

Mouse control

To finish a tower Mickey completes the subgames hidden behind the tower's doors. On the first tower these include an overhead-view-maze-game with Mickey searching for a hammer, nails and wood, avoiding bubble meanies, before escaping to seal the door. The second subgame has Mickey running around a wraparound rotating balcony, dodging monsters and trying to burst a certain number of bubbles by dropping hammers on them. Should a bubble be missed, part of the balcony is eroded. On both these subgames Mickey has three lives to lose before being kicked out. To retry the subgame Mickey must find another key by killing numerous evil guardians.



On later, multiloaded towers, more monsters and different subgames are added. One subgame involves jumping from platform to platform, evading monsters while trying to turn off four taps. Another is a *Donkey Kong* variant with Mickey hammering in corks to prevent them dripping while watching out for monsters. Finishing is achieved by bashing the big ogre when his shield disappears.

Once all four towers have been completed, Mickey crosses the Devil's bridge to face the Ogre King. While avoiding the King's fireballs Mickey must shoot him with the water pistol to finally end his horrible reign.

OTHER FORMATS

Conversions are planned for Commodore 64/128 and Amstrad CPC, both £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk, with an imminent ST version at £19.99.

SPECTRUM 48/128
Cassette £7.99
Diskette: £12.99

While neither the tower section or any of the subgames set new standards for the Spectrum, they're well-integrated and produce a surprisingly addictive game overall. The urge to see later subgames provides a strong incentive to complete the first tower, which is tough enough that multiload doesn't rear its head until well into the game. Sound FX are functional with some nice tunes, but there's no 128 option to load in all the levels at once.

OVERALL 87%

"A surprisingly addictive game"

VERSION UPDATE

Jester one of those games

BLACK LAMP
Firebird

Amiga: £19.95

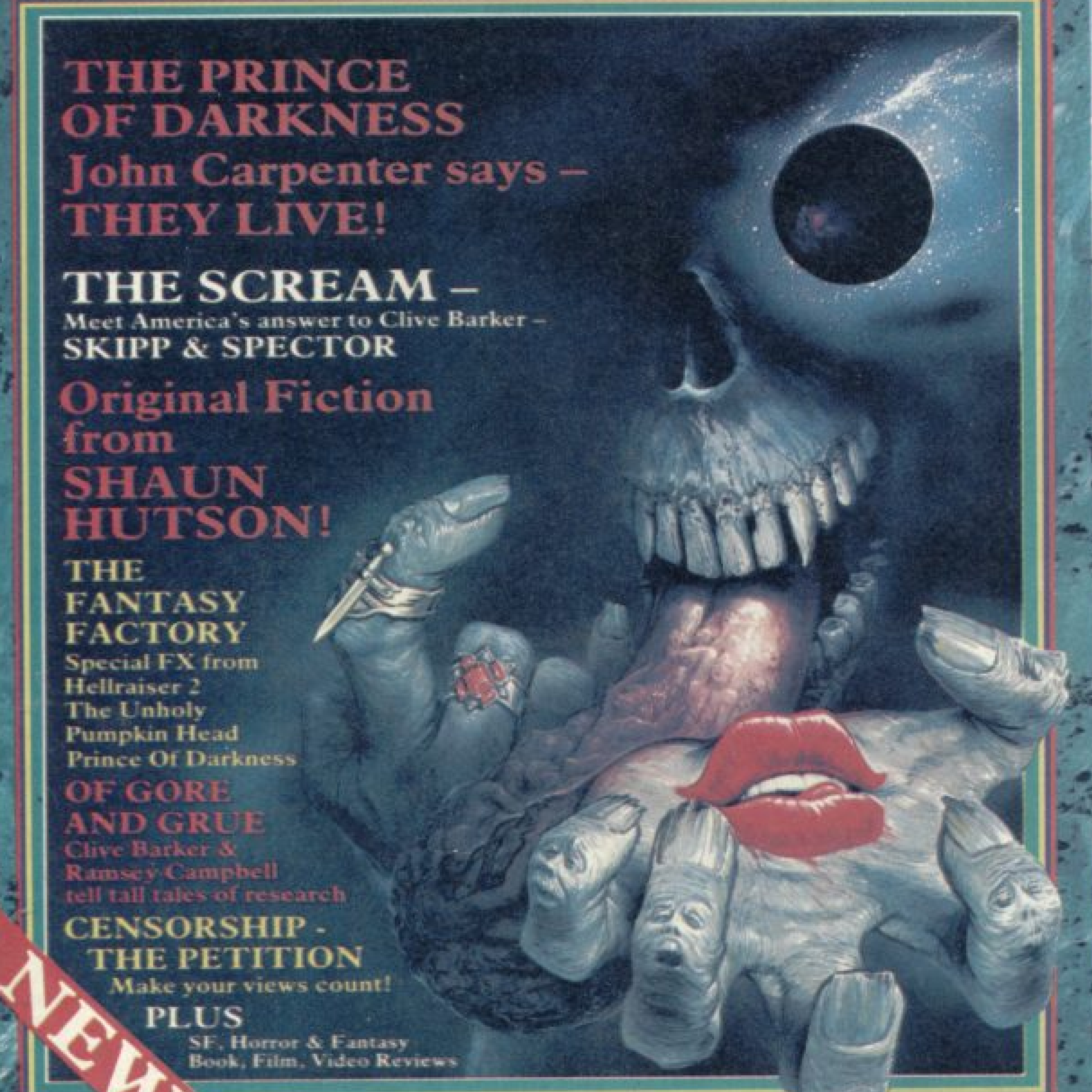
JOLLY JACK the jovial jester appears as if by magic on the Amiga. His quest is to rid the medieval kingdom of monsters and dragons by collecting nine magic lanterns. His may also gain the bonus of marrying the princess if he is successful.

The Amiga conversion is of the same standard as the Atari ST game (reviewed in TGM**004**, 86%) with colourful cartoon characters and detailed backdrops. Basically a platforms and ladders variant, and while still highly enjoyable, *Black Lamp* could be have been improved for the Amiga. Music comes in the form of a speedy *Greensleeves* tune – which grates after a while – and is accompanied by suitable sound effect.

AMIGA: OVERALL 85%

Jester draws on his ability to find lanterns





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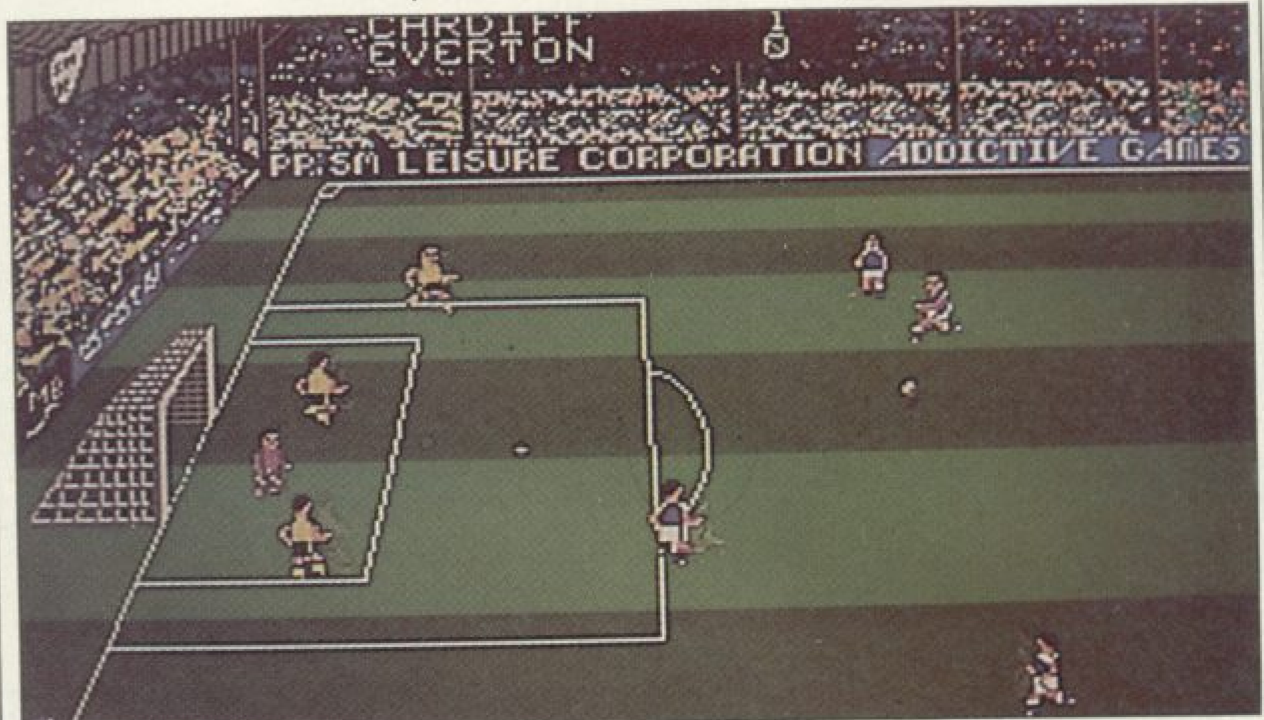
Spectrum 48/128: Cassette: £9.99, Diskette: £14.99
Amiga: £19.99

HOT on the trail of the Atari ST version reviewed last month (65%), come the Spectrum and Amiga updates.

To begin, you choose a team from the available 92 which is placed in the fourth division with half a million pounds in the bank and companies clamouring to offer sponsorship. From here, the only way is up . . . through the ranks to the first division, and to win the major division and league cups on the way. As team manager you have to make all decisions to get the best out of your men. As long as your club is solvent it remains in the league. If liquid assets fall into the red however, bankruptcy and defeat soon follow.

The Amiga version is virtually identical to the ST game, no attempt has been made to enhance it. Control of the Spectrum version is easier than on the 16-bit machines, and the players are more independent – less likely to play follow the leader. Despite the lack of 'pretty' graphics, the Spectrum game is the most playable of all.

AMIGA: OVERALL 63%
SPECTRUM: OVERALL 68%



The players pitch in to do their best for the manager – Amiga

THE AVENGERS

NIGHT RAIDER
Gremlin Graphics

Sydney Developments is a name associated with Canadian ex-TV commentator **Michael Bate**, who designed games like *Dambusters*, marketed through US Gold. This is his first through Gremlin Graphics, as **Acme Animations**. Other titles Bate is known for during his seven years in computer games include *Killed Until Dead* and *Ace Of Aces*.

Launched in 1939 the battleship Bismarck was one of the most fearsome weapons in the German Navy and a major threat to Allied convoys crossing the Atlantic to the Britain. It was thus one of most important intelligence coups of WWII when Norwegian secret agents received information on the ship's course. A Royal Navy Battle Group led by HMS Hood was despatched to find and sink the Bismarck.

Unfortunately in the first incident of the pursuit the Hood fell foul of a lethal battery from the battleship's massive guns. All but three of Hood's 1400 officers and crew were lost. Attacks by Swordfish biplanes earned a measure of vengeance later that night by crucially damaging the port rudder. Limited to only eight knots per hour, Bismarck became a sitting target and more Swordfish strikes were launched the next day.

The next generation of torpedo bombers, represented by a prototype Grumman Avenger, had meanwhile been secretly shipped to the carrier Ark Royal. During the last hours of the Bismarck the Avenger was used to serious effect, knocking out four gun turrets. Subsequently the Avenger went on to become the greatest torpedo bomber of WWII, although with only a single engine it is not actually the aircraft used on the packaging.

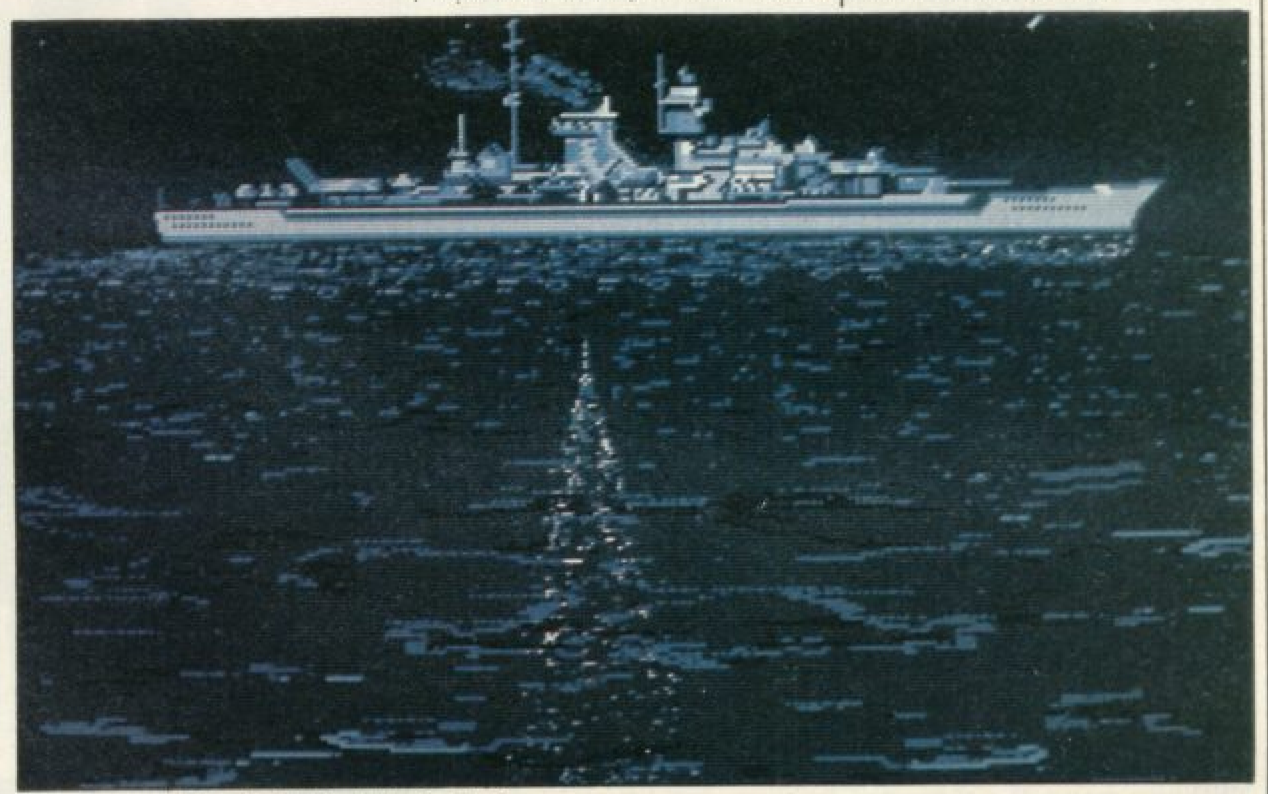
E-Boats

Besides the all-important mission against the Bismarck *Night Raider* allows newly recruited pilots to practise any of the mission stages, and several other combat missions as well. Once training has been completed the pilot is given a choice of straws to determine which mission he undertakes first. You may refuse a few missions, but not too many or you might be withdrawn from flying.

After a mission has been accepted the view changes to the Pilot's cockpit from which the plane is flown and the torpedo dropped. Although guns can be fired from this position most air-to-air combat involves the tail gunner's view which can selected at any time. No less vital work is done on the engineer's screen where various systems must be set correctly for landing or flying, throttle set and a camera activated if you want to playback an attack on the battleship. The fourth, and final screen is the navigator's which allows a destination to be selected presenting a marker on the pilot's screen that must then be followed.

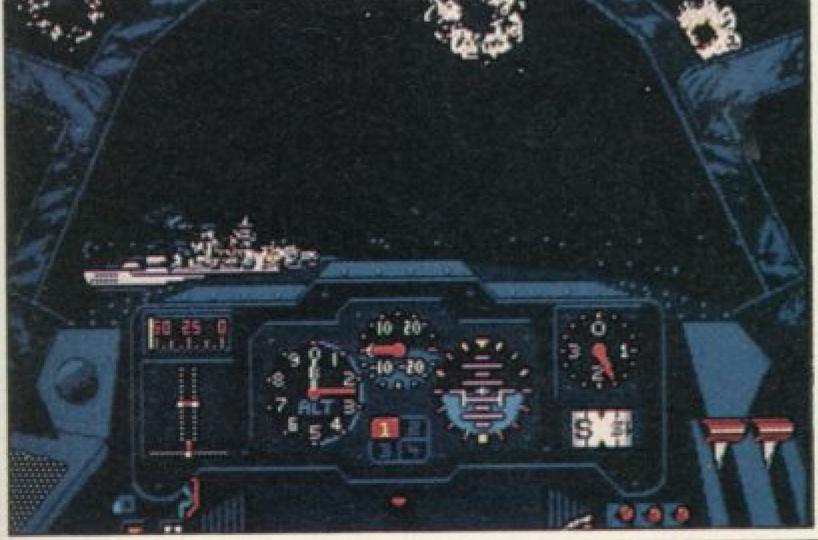
Long missions require frequent returns to your home base, the carrier Ark Royal, and to complete a mission you must make a successful landing. For this reason it's a good idea to keep an eye out on the navigation screen for German mine fields, E-boats (small torpedo boats), and U-boats (submarines). Seemingly inexhaustible waves of enemy Dornier aircraft are also shown on the navigation screen.

The game opens with digitised pictures of Hitler and Churchill accompanied with some superb sampled speech. By comparison the game itself is disappointing; enemy craft are represented by sprites which always present the same view of themselves. Constant attack from enemy fighters can become repetitive as well, though hunting down U-boats is quite exciting.



Torpedos away! Ever had that sinking feeling?

What the flaks going on? Bismark is sighted



ATARI ST
Diskette: £19.95

A serious problem is the placing of the reset key directly beside the one for selecting the pilot's view – in the heat of battle it's all too easy to hit the wrong key. Despite the dual demands of missions, both defending the Ark Royal and attacking the enemy, the gameplay is very suggestive of the designer's earlier games and does not make full use of the ST.

OVERALL 70%

OTHER VERSIONS

Conversions are imminent for the Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC and Spectrum 48/128, all at £9.99 cass and £14.99 disk. An Amiga and PC version should be available around the same time for £19.99

"Gameplay is suggestive of earlier games and does not make full use of the ST"

ROB STEEL'S GETTING ADVENTUROUS

STEEL SHAVINGS

Rob Steel's befuddled brain strikes again . . . What is the point of reviewing mail-order adventures if one is going to leave out the address where interested parties can buy the games? Last month I examined two such games and neglected to include the addresses. To put it right: *Investigations* is available from Graphtext, *162 Bourne Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex UB3 1QT* and *Skelvullyn Twine* may be ordered from Eighth Day, *18 Flaxhill, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside L46 7UH*.

While I'm in apology mode I may as well make myself look a complete idiot (no comments please): I can't spell Jekyll, it has two 'L's not one as was printed last issue and one of Eighth Day's previous games is titled *Ice Station Zero* not *Zebra*.

This month I get corrupted (couldn't happen to a nicer guy) thanks to Magnetic Scrolls and journey into the future using my mind (doesn't seem possible does it?). *Mindfighter* from Abstract Concepts comes in attractive packaging that provides hours of entertainment even before the game is loaded.



The eyes have it . . . which one of these ugly buggers is the mysterious Man Of Steel, and are they really 'wearing'* Mindfighter *boxes, or do they always look like this?

THE REALM

Cult
Spectrum 48/128 Cassette: £1.99

D & H Games are more famous for their football orientated software, it was therefore with interest and some trepidation that I loaded this adventure from their new budget label, Cult, hoping that it wouldn't be a *Football Frenzy*.

The first point of interest is the staggering in-depth game background included in the packaging. It is:

'Wandering through the wilderness to the North of Thryll town, you come across a strange wood. Dare you step beneath its brooding eaves?'. Makes you want to rip the cassette box open and plunge in doesn't it?

After ingesting the scenario I started the game loading and waited. The first screen to appear asked if I was male or female, once I had decided and input my answer the adventure proper began.

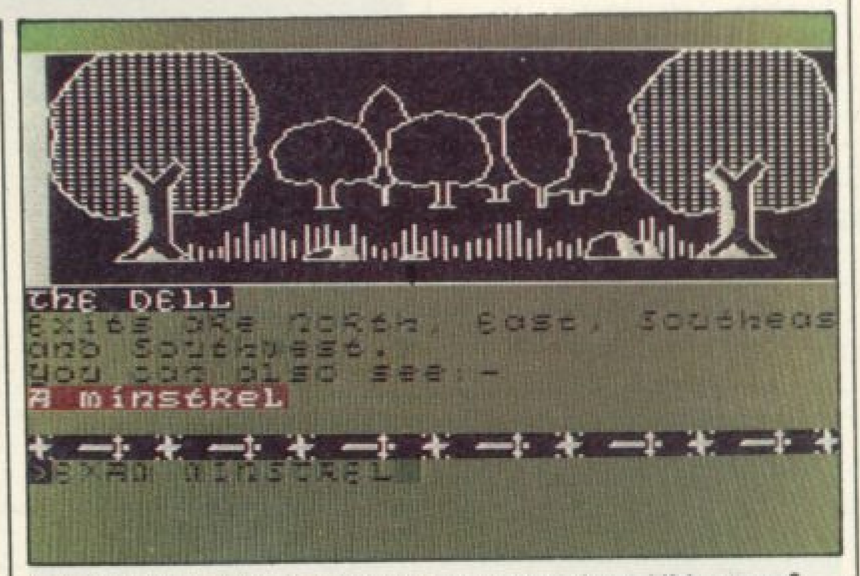
A garish green screen sat before me informing in black text that I was south of the wood. A very basic, childish graphic stared back at me from atop the written descriptions. This was obviously the spooky wood the scenario was daring me to enter . . . In I went.

The text descriptions are sparse, treating you with such dripping prose as: 'The forest. Exits are North' and 'The Cottage. Exits are North and Northwest'.

Regardless, I trudged onward. The first place of interest was the wizard's cottage in which I found a book of spells, a furry creature and a carrot. The wizard asked me to stay and guard his magic book until he returned. Deciding not to trust him, I tried to leave (with the book), unfortunately magic powers were working to prevent me from doing so. I discarded the spellbook for the time being and walked out of the cottage to explore the surrounding wood.

A one-carrot game

I came across an old woman, a minstrel (who sang a ballad for me) and a fair maiden. All these characters were there for a reason.



Plain graphics, minstrels – dare you step beneath its stultifying prose?

Quickly discovering the lack of vocabulary within the adventure and deciding that none of them were interested in my carrot, I continued on my travels. Further discoveries included a pond, a swarm of bees, a snake and a duck – which I managed to frighten sufficiently to make it lay an egg.

The Realm is a not a good adventure. It lacks all the ingredients necessary to keep you playing (except for the ease of mapping) and its problems are obscure enough to prompt premature boredom. That it is a budget game is no excuse for producing an inferior product, perhaps D & H Games should stick to their successful format of football simulations.

ATMOSPHERE 18%
INTERACTION 17%
OVERALL 18%

CORRUPTION

Rainbird/Magnetic Scrolls
Atari ST Diskette: £24.95

The world has waited with bated breath for this latest release from Magnetic Scrolls. Anita Sinclair and Co have set themselves a standard by which all adventures – especially their own – are now judged. Does *Corruption* compare favourably or are the creators of *The Pawn* and *Guild Of Thieves* following the Level Nine/Infocom trait of late and resting on their laurels after initial success?

High finance and commercial intrigue are now-subjects, of which more people are becoming aware, thanks to the coverage and interest shown in the near recrash of Wall Street late last year, the number of company shares being offered to 'the man in the street' and the successful movie starring Michael Douglas, *Wall Street*. Magnetic Scrolls – themselves no doubt recent experts in the world of money matters due to their phenomenal success – hold out their hand for the band wagon to stop and let them on with their latest adventure, *Corruption*.

You have been framed by your new business partner and, if that were not enough, an irate drugs baron desires to make you history. It will take all your skills to turn the tables on these criminals and prove your innocence. Playing by the rules is a non-starter, to regain standing and clear your name, devious ploys, greed and sheer ruthlessness are the required qualities.

As you can imagine I found *Corruption* difficult to play, it's so against my nature to be deceitful. However, I did my best in order to provide a report on the adventure.

The story starts innocently enough with you being shown your new office by partner David Rogers. He informs you that should you have any problems, all you have to do is ask. He stays in the first location long enough for you to interact with him once; it was at this point that I found a very good way of ending the game: input 'Hit David' and see what happens.

Once this jolly wheeze had lost its attraction I got down to the game proper.

Mostly revolving around interaction with the other characters, *Corruption* is difficult to get into. Knowledge is all and once learned must be passed on to the correct recipient for the best results. Telling the wrong people too much spells trouble.

As the plot unravels you discover that your wife, Jenny, is having an affair with David (over lunch she asks you for a divorce), David is wanted by the fraud office and Theresa feeds the ducks during her lunch hour. Intrigue, intrigue . . .

I scored 30 points by simply following instructions and passing on bits of gossip, however, what was required of me from this point became a little vague.

THERESA'S OFFICE 11:13AM

Files Text Graphics Goodies

David is here. Theresa is painting her nails.
"Oh 'ello. You must be Mr. Rogers," she says. "I'm Theresa. Nice to meet you."
David opens the door and goes into his office
>smile_

These atmospheric graphics can confuse – stick to text mode

In the picture

The now-expected high standard of graphics, parser, atmosphere and interaction are all present in *Corruption* – although the picture content is strange. They depict people in their offices after they have left, and cars in the carpark which you watched drive off only seconds previously. I found playing in text-only mode best.

I have the feeling that the game is too clever for its own good. It's possible to grill people about topics you hadn't discovered yet and tell them things you have yet to find out. On occasions information you do know is impossible to pass on to supposedly interested parties. This ultimately leads to frustration and confusion.

The packaging is well presented, thoughtful, and contains useful (and useless) items for the game. These include a casino chip, Filofax-style documentation, the ultimate gamblers' and business entertainment guides and an audio cassette which needs to be played at certain times during the adventure.

Unfortunately these do not help make the game better. *Corruption* is like unto a jelly that won't quite set, it has all the best ingredients but they just don't gel. I didn't enjoy their previous adventure, *Jinxter* and, although implemented very professionally and no doubt heading for success, for me *Corruption* is no better.

ATMOSPHERE 68%
INTERACTION 77%
OVERALL 73%

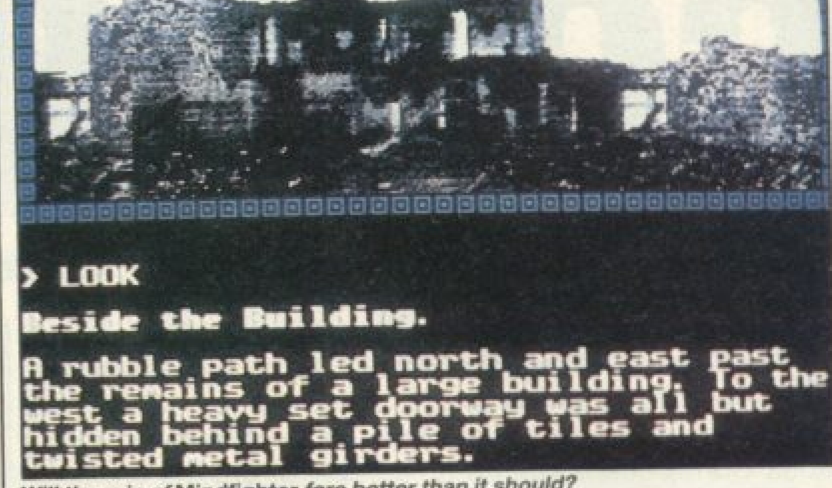
Success corrupts and great success corrupts greatly: the Jinxter jinx is still on Magnetic Scrolls



MINDFIGHTER

Abstract Concepts
ATARI ST: £24.99

Some months ago, **Anna Popkess** and her man, **Fergus McNeill**, travelled the picturesque route to Ludlow to meet me. I had seen all the promotional pictures for the adventure (the brooding shot of Anna and Fergus sitting next to a withered tree) and was pleased to discover that Anna is even better looking in the flesh; Fergus is taller. They were here to show me their first adventure, *Mindfighter* – created using Fergus's utility, *SWAN*.



Will the ruin of Mindfighter *fare better than it should?*

My hopes for *Mindfighter* were high as I loaded the ST version. They soon faded . . .

The scenario concerns a boy named Robin – played by your good self – and his ability to mind-travel through time. He inadvertently stumbles across a very bleak future for mankind. Robin wakes into his nightmare atop a mound of rubble in a desolate, ruined cityscape, immediately post–holocaust. He discovers an organisation, known only as The System, is controlling the few, weakened humans that remain alive. Robin resolves not only to escape but to discover who is subverting mankind and attempt to put a stop to it – all within 24 hours.

The screen is split in two, with moody graphics framed within an oblong window above the scrolling white text. The parser is obviously quite sophisticated – understanding ALL, IT, OOPS, RAM SAVE etc – unfortunately the actual vocabulary is ridiculously small.

One of the features pointed out to me by the creators was the program's ability to think. If one is faced with a locked door to the North and the correct key is being carried, the single input, 'N' results in the game replying 'Robin unlocked the door, opened it and went North'. If Robin is attacked and wants to dispose of his assailant, typing 'Kill Guard', for example, not only produces a retaliation but one carried out with the most useful object Robin has in his inventory. This feature ends those annoying Magnetic Scrolls-type typing lessons:

Input: 'Unlock door'
Reply: 'What with?'
Input: 'Key'
Reply: 'Which key?'
Input: 'Brass key'
Reply: 'Which brass key? The old brass key or the new brass key?'
Input: 'Quit'

Swaning around

However, this relief for finger sores soon fades to insignificance as the unbelievable lack of attention to detail raises its bugly head. The most obvious irritant is in the mapping. Travelling North from location A to location B does not necessarily mean that moving South from B returns you to A. This happens all too often and is boring, tedious, frustrating, annoying, confusing and pointless.

There are further idiosyncrasies: Robin may be holding a rag and, if in possession of the lighter, can quite happily burn the rag. However, if he should drop the rag he can no longer burn it as it appears no longer to exist, and yet there it is resting on the ground. Trying to pour the petrol out of the jerry can is equally frustrating and can take a ridiculous number of inputs before the solution is found – all logical commands fail.

Death comes fairly frequently to Robin, and the toughness of the problems coupled with the lack of help and logic incorporated in the game make each death easier to live with. A good idea with nice packaging, it's sad the game is such a let down.

Available for most 8- and 16-bit formats, *Mindfighter* will probably do better than it deserves to. I hope Abstract Concepts's next adventure will be a substantial improvement, after all the authors are very nice people.

ATMOSPHERE 57%
INTERACTION 34%
OVERALL 45%

STEEL TIPS

I've had so many requests for a tips section to be included in my adventure column that I can no longer ingnore your cries. I begin briefly with help for two adventures, both available on 8- and 16-bit machines.

TIME AND MAGIK Part 2

Mandarin/Level Nine

To get the coins from under the grate, wave the horseshoe.

To cross the chasm; drop the scroll and the acorn then read the scroll.

The Tracers let you carry more.

To open the tower door say 'Humak'.

To destroy the mummies, say 'Obis' then say 'Ollabin'.

To get passed the watchdog, put the pills in the meat then give it to him.

BALLYHOO

Infocom

Punch out either the blue or pink dot to get the ticket into the turnstile.

Breath the helium from the balloon to get a squeaky voice.

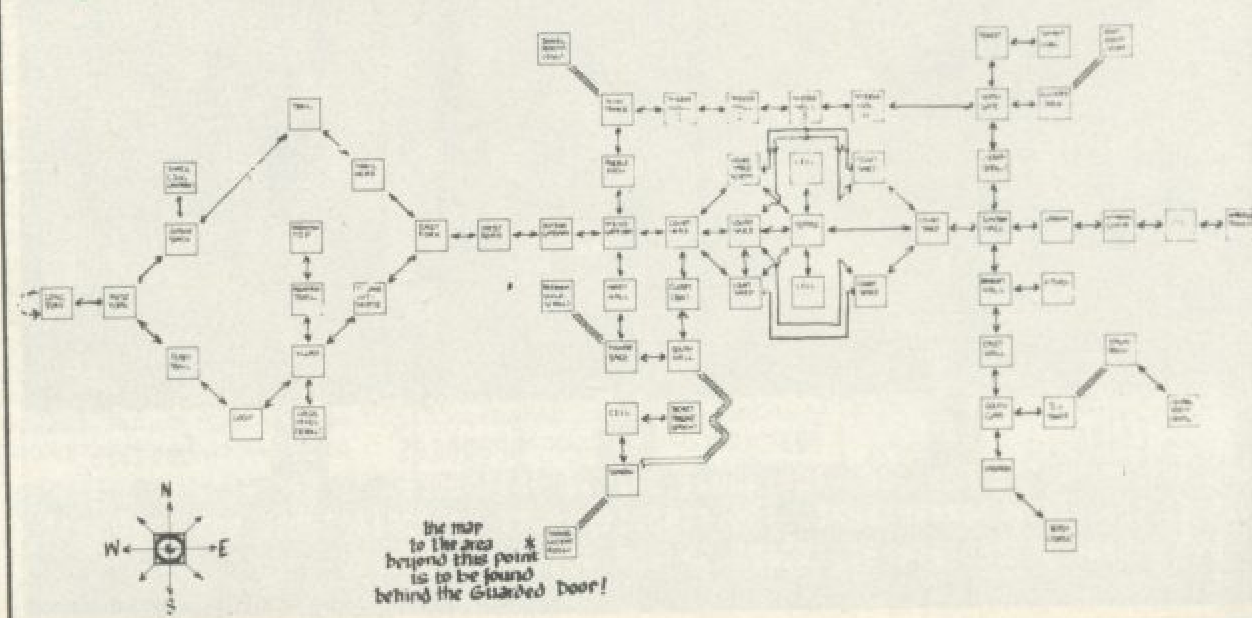
Tina likes chocolate bars.

Lions prefer to dine alone.

Banana lollies are a monkey's favourite treat.

This month's tips are only a start-up pack, but if you have any tips or maps that you would like to add to my own to pass on to TGM readers, please send them to: STEEL TIPS, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*

Map Of ENCHANTER (Infocom)



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TITLE	ATARI ST	AMIGA	IBM PC
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FANTASY GAMES

John Woods continues his sandwich course on how to play various roles by getting flushed looking at The Power Behind The Throne, becoming a Fantasy Hero and using all his force to examine the Star Wars campaign pack.

FANTASY HERO

The Roleplaying Game Of Epic Adventure

Hero Games, £13.95, 160pp paperback

Fantasy Hero has been around for three years without gaining wide recognition or popularity, which is a pity since the system, designed by Steve Peterson, includes a number of unusual and appealing features which make it deserve to be played more widely.

Fantasy Hero is clearly written with the experienced gamer in mind – not necessarily someone who has been playing for years, but one already familiar with at least one roleplaying game system. So the rulebook doesn't bother with the usual 'What is a Roleplaying Game?' section save for a token paragraph. Instead the introductory chapter gives an example character sheet and explains in brief what each entry represents, followed by a similar overview of the game's combat system.

At this point the reader is directed to a very brief solo adventure at the rear of the book to be played using the example character. It explains the necessary rule mechanics as they are required, and is a very easy way to introduce the game; after working through the first chapter and the solo adventure, players or referees already have a good idea of the basic game concepts, and subsequent chapters therefore make sense more quickly.

First the rules properly cover character creation – one of the most appealing parts of the system. Whereas in most games, players roll dice to randomly determine character abilities, in *Fantasy Hero* there's no element of luck whatsoever. Instead players create a character with exactly the skills and abilities they require by spending a certain number of character points. Each characteristic (*intelligence, dexterity* and so on) has a certain basic score which a player increases by allocating points. The total-points-cost depends of both the level of the increase and the usefulness of the characteristic purchased. Thus to buy up *dexterity* – a crucially important factor in combat – by a single point costs the same as increasing *comeliness* (physical beauty) by six points.

Character points can also be used to buy skills (such as *riding, medical ability, knowledge of exotic languages*), combat abilities (skills with particular weapons such as crossbows or clubs) and knowledge of magic spells.

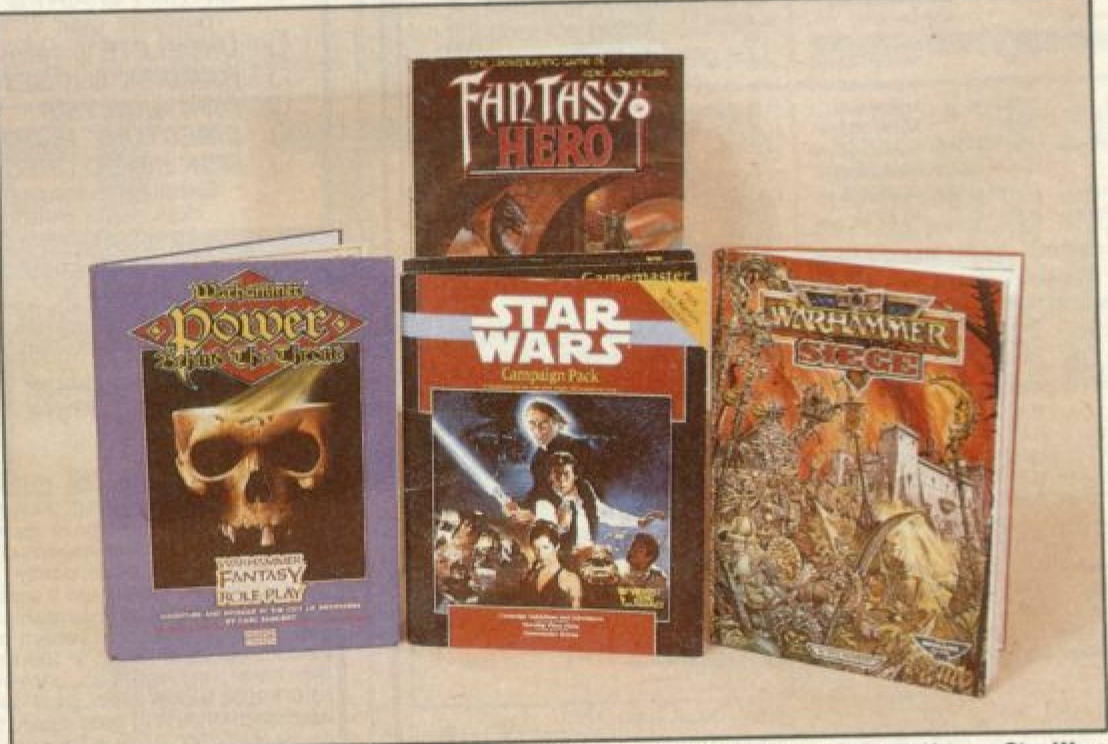
Exactly the same system is used to allow PCs to progress with experience – after a successful adventure the referee awards players a few more character points to allow further skills to be bought. But what if the initial total of character points is insufficient to create the type of character you'd like to play, for instance if a wizard needs to buy several expensive spells? Either other less important characteristics can be traded off for additional points, or one or more *disadvantages* are imposed. These are the most entertaining part of the generation procedure, and range widely in seriousness and consequent points value. For example, a character may choose to be *hunted* and thereby gain from one (occasionally pestered by the village blacksmith for an unpaid bill) to 13 (fanatically pursued by an entire goblin clan) character points.

Other *disadvantages* possible are physical or psychological limitations (ranging from a slight limp to blindness, mild claustrophobia to suicidal overconfidence), distinctive looks and more. The combination of the free choice of abilities plus suitable *disadvantages* makes it very easy to generate exactly the sort of character you wish to play with a minimum of fuss. Starting characters can have impressive abilities in limited fields but have to make sacrifices elsewhere – a wizard of any note is no use at fighting, for instance. This means that cooperation between characters is of vital importance from the start.

The skill system is elegantly simple yet covers all situations

The skill system is both elegantly simple and of sufficient scope to cover almost all situations. All actions are resolved by a roll on three six-sided dice. The score required for success (to pick a lock, seduce a princess, decapitate a troll or whatever) depends both on the circumstances and on the character's skill in the relevant ability. The combat resolution procedure is novel and easy-to-use, with characters being able to perform a number of actions each round as determined by their *speed*, the faster characters being able to act sooner and more often. These are rules for the effects of exhaustion and knockout blows as well as the usual *hit point* type of damage, so a fight with fists and feet is more likely to end in one combatant unconscious, whereas swords and bows usually kill.

Fantasy Hero is a generic system, intended not for a specific fantasy world but rather to be tailored by referees to suit their own preferred setting. To this end there are no great lists of equipment prices or pages and pages of maps or monster descriptions. Instead the book includes enough details to give the referee guidelines, examples of some common types of monster such as giants and skeletons and some pages of advice on designing and running your own campaigns. From this basis the rules can be adapted to any world you like – even the magic spells are designed to be created by referee and players to suit themselves. The flexibility of the system is reflected by



Fantastic four: this month's crop includes Steve Peterson's neglected classic **Fantasy Hero**, *a* **Star Wars** *supplement and a duo from Games Workshop*

the fact that Hero Games have produced a number of other products using the same basic rules adapted for totally different settings *Justice Inc* is a Twenties RPG, *Champions* a superhero game and *Danger International* is modern-day roleplaying.

This is little-known system certainly deserves more players. The rules are very clearly written and attractively presented, and the game offers wonderful opportunities for referees who are prepared either to develop their own background material or to spend a little time customising adventures intended for other systems. Well worth tracking down!

IN BRIEF

Games Workshop's *Power Behind The Throne* (£9.99) by **Carl Sargent** is the latest release in the *Enemy Within* series of adventure modules for *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*.

They have kept the sturdy, attractive hardback format of recent releases, but the adventure's style is somewhat different. Whereas previous scenarios in this series have been fairly typical action-packed mysteries with rather linear plotlines (too linear on occasion – things can get awkward for the referee if players think of courses of action the designers didn't anticipate), this adventure is a more open-ended political thriller.

Set in the city of Middenheim, the adventurers become involved in political machinations arising from unpopular new tax laws until eventually, as the title suggests, they confront the sinister mastermind who has manipulated events to his own ends. It takes place against the lively backdrop of Middenheim's Carnival Week (including the legendary Blackpool illuminations), and the book contains an appropriate array of attractions to amuse and divert players. A city map is included and, most importantly, details of a large number of non-player characters, interaction with which forms the backbone of the adventure. An unusual scenario with a greater need for referee and player skill than its predecessors – should be a lot of fun.

Also from Games Workshop is *Warhammer Siege* (£12.99): details of fortifications, siege engines, tunnelling and much more for siege-based battles in both *Warhammer Fantasy* battle and GW's popular *Warhammer 40,000* futuristic wargame. Lots of pull-out reference sheets and maps plus an introductory fantasy siege scenario complete what should be a useful package for miniatures wargamers looking for something a little different from the standard pitched battle.

Lastly, I was very pleased to note the appearance of the *Star Wars Campaign Pack* (£6.95) from West End Games, the first adventure supplement for the wonderful *Star Wars* roleplaying system. Rather than offer adventures worked out to the last detail, which are fine for inexperienced or overworked referees but offer less fun per pound on the whole, West End have produced the supplement in the form of a campaign pack – background material, non-player characters and maps for a particular setting combined with a number of short adventure outlines giving plots, which can be modified as the referee wishes into a complete adventure suitable for an evening or so of play.

Carl Sargent's latest is an open-ended political thriller

In this particular pack the adventures are all based around a rebel group known as Reekeene's Roughnecks as they make life a misery for Darth Vader and Co in the Fakir sector. Five outline adventures are included, one of which is also worked out into a fully-detailed scenario. Also in the pack is a four-page booklet of upgrades to the original rulebook, comprising principally a minor but useful reworking of the combat system, a stand-up screen covered with reference tables, a large map of the Long Shot (the PCs' starship) and some counters for use in the *Star Warriors* boardgame to represent the new ships introduced.

Don't expect reams of background detail though – the philosophy of the game's designers seems to be that providing star charts and planetary maps for a game of such huge scope would be an irrelevance, and I think I agree. It only takes a little work for a referee to flesh out the necessary details, and the material offered is much more generally useful as a result. Recommended for all *Star Wars* players.



COMPETITION RESULTS

MSX-II COMPETITION

Nightdare Computers had a marvellous Philips 8220 MSX-II computer as first prize, and **Konami** offered copies of *Salamander* to the 20 runners-up. The game titles (left to right) were: *Nemesis II*, *Metal Gear*, *Vampire Killer* and *Usas*. And the winner is **Adrian De-Terville**, Beds LU2 7DH. While the runners-up are:

Mike Blaser, Cheshire SK8 4HP; Kirtesh Dusara, Middlesex HA9 8TQ; Peter Hearn, Hants RG26 6SS; HD Ruston, West Midlands B62 8HH; James Hinman, Manchester M10 9RY; B Sherry, Essex SS15 5NG; Ben Dodson, Merseyside L62 8AL; Johnson Tang, S Wales CF2 4NL; Justin Grantham, Berks SL1 2LH; Peter Andrew, London SE20 8BJ; Thomas Lynch, Birmingham B13 7LR; Paul Beharrell, Milton Keynes MK11 1NS; John Herman, W Yorkshire WF8 2EN; David Puhan, W Yorks HD3 4DL; Mark Illingworth, Leeds LS19 7LY; Howard Glynn, Tyne & Wear NE25 8BG; Andrew Huntley, Co Durham DH8 0PP; Jo Potts, Cheshire WA14 2ND; Scott Meikle, Scotland ML3 9TF; Shane Reed, Dudley DY2 0RZ.

HELLO SAILOR

A day out at sea on a modern warship, courtesy of **Electronic Arts** for five winners and a chum or parent goes to **Steven Dawson**, Lancs BB6 7NH; **M Mitchell**, Hull HU9 3LP; **Chris Garbutt**, Essex SS13 1RR; **Richard Clayton**, Clwyd LL22 7UQ and **Simon Wiles**, Hants PO7 6PR. They got the answers right: 1) HMS Ludlow, 2) 125.7 metres, 3) Sidewinder, 4) 17½.

TGM PARTY HEADQUARTERS

We wanted to create a top software chart, and three voting winners, drawn from the hat, each receives software vouchers for £50. They are: **AR Fussey**, Leamington Spa CV31 1HG; **Derek Wong**, Surrey CR4 8EB and **Wayne Learoyd**, Leeds LS13 4EH. The resulting Top 10 Software Chart can be seen elsewhere on the page.

BATTLE OF THE PHASERS

To celebrate *Lazer Tag* – the game – GO! offered an all-expenses-paid day out in metropolitan Birmingham to attend a Lazer-Tag battle, as well as giving away copies of the game and a Lazer Tag set. The answers are: 1) Starlyte, 2) Worlds of Wonder, 3) Compact Disc player. The winners are:

Jonathan Williams, Glos GL7 3DB; John Sholicar, Glos GL52 3DA; Robert Collier, Herefordshire HR6 8HF; Anthony Byng, Worcs B60 1JP; Mark Baker, Birmingham B33 9UW; David Richards, Worcs DY10 2UE; David Haffner, Redditch B97 6LY; Craig Talbot, Worcs DY13 8TP; Mark Millinchip, W Midlands DY3 2PF; Wayne Haywood, Stourbridge DY8 4TJ.

TOP TEN SOFTWARE

As voted by THE GAMES MACHINE readership. This is not a machine chart, we went by title, although some games are obviously only available on specific machines – so they did very well!

1 **Barbarian**
2 **Ikari Warriors**
3 **Bubble Bobble**
4 **Wizball**
5 **Gauntlet**
6 **Renegade**
7 **Buggy Boy**
8 **Last Ninja**
9 **Defender Of The Crown**
10 **Out Run**

DISNEY SPELLS

In 1983 a coin-op was released called *Dragon's Lair*. The game centred around the tasks of the gallant knight Dirk the Daring and his attempts to rescue the fair maiden Daphne from the evil dragon's castle. Along the way, Dirk encounters a wide, and at times very weird, variety of traps and creatures as he progresses ever nearer Daphne and the final confrontation with the Dragon. A fairly standard adventure plot, but what made the game stand out were the extraordinary cartoon graphics and the presence of a laser disc player within the cabinet.

The pictures were created and brought to life through the talents of an ex-Walt Disney graphic artist – their standard is very high. During the game the player is required to perform the correct rapid joystick actions with near split-second timing in order to succeed through encounters. At key moments in each scene, the laser disc displays a sequence based on the player's actions, with good or bad results.

Dragon's Lair was revolutionary in its use of a laser disc as a storage medium for graphics, providing obviously much more realistic and detailed pictures than computer-generated graphics, and allowing for traditional film animation on a scale a computer would consider luxury. There were short intervals for laser disc access, but the phenomenal results rendered the short pause unnoticeable.

Not surprisingly, home computer versions were eventually to appear with Software Projects producing two 8-bit games; *Dragon's Lair* and its sequel *Escape From Singe's Castle* – both games met with moderate success. Now Microdeal has created an experimental system using the *Dragon's Lair* laser disc, a disc player and an Atari ST, to bring the coin-op into your own home. The system has been worked on almost since the ST first came out; the fruits of that labour have now come to light following an intensive period of playtesting and debugging.

Knight law

For £99.95 the purchaser of the *Journey Into The Lair* package can expect to receive the laser disc containing the entire set of graphics and sound of the original arcade machine (over 20,000 frames can be held on the 12" disc) and the 3.5 floppy disk holding the controlling program. The cable connections are purchased separately for £19.95.

Both TV and monitor output is possible. TV output is through the aerial, but stereo amplification is required for a monitor. Without a stereo monitor it's only possible to have one channel in operation (unless the left and right channels are linked together), the single channel playing either the speech (screams and other dialogue) or music and sound effects. In the



Reptilian death at the hands of the Lizard King

TGM offices a standard TV was used to review the system and an Amiga Philips CM8833 monitor for photography.

On booting up, the main control screen uses the GEM environment to run the program and pull-down menus are used to operate the system. One of three skill levels can be selected at the start, Vassal is the beginner level, Knight intermediate and Lord the most difficult level; the number of lives may also be defined to one, three or five.

The main difference between the computer driven version and the arcade machine is the form of interaction that takes place. Word input is required in each encounter instead of selecting a joystick action. The level of word input increases with each skill level, on Vassal level a single word is required for input, the Knight and Lord levels bring in verb-noun structured sentences such as SWING LEFT, GRAB ROPE, USE SWORD, JUMP LEFT, not quite in the Infocom or Magnetic Scrolls league but it takes the game away from the arcade action and more toward the adventure side.

Perishing Dirk

Depending on the encounter, up to 12 possible actions are displayed, only one action is correct, selecting any of the others leads Dirk to a very nasty death sequence. The situation dictates what action is logically correct, although in some encounters logic becomes a secondary factor to luck. Certain killer screens are those where it is impossible to judge what would happen next, the correct solution often appearing the most dangerous or illogical. At any time during the input phase, the game status can be saved to 3.5" disk, storing the player's achievements, score, location and number of lives.

The earlier rooms only require one command to pass through successfully, this situation doesn't last long. Further rooms contain multiple hazards requiring multiple actions in a set sequence – deviate from the sequence and Dirk perishes to be replaced at the start of the encounter again.

The laser disc player used to review *Journey Into The Lair* was a Pioneer LD-700, although most conventional players can be connected up and used, through the configuration software. To use different machines, the relevant software is loaded in to configure the connected player to operate with the program.

The system works by making the player run the automatic sequence from the disc leading up to the input phase, the on-screen action then pauses to bring the system back under ST control to await input. Once word input is made, the machine scans the disc and runs the resulting death or success sequence.

THE GAME TESTED

The graphics and sound in *Journey Into the Lair* are straight from the arcade machine, and as such cannot be faulted. Interaction between game player and laser disc player is a little rough, the action just stops and then pauses awaiting your input. However, the pause does give you time to think, which is a lot fairer than the lightning-fast demands required of the arcade machine. As a result it becomes more of a multiple choice adventure than arcade action game. And like all multiple choice games, it doesn't take long to exhaust its possibilities, particularly if you've played the arcade machine.

Solutions to each encounter are inconsistent in their logic, leading to the use of the haphazard trial and error methods for playing.

Had joystick control been possible, it would have increased enjoyment, adding a lot more appeal and challenge, but John Symes explains that the laser disc player reaction time is not yet quick enough. For all its cost, the controlling software is primitive, relying on the Gem environment to run the laser disc and only operating in medium resolution mode (despite booting up into low resolution.) As an experiment, Microdeal are to be congratulated for their market innovativeness, as a game, *Journey into the Lair* is poor value for money, for all its amazing graphic and sonic qualities. But it may well lead the way to the future, and Microdeal will have helped that come about.

Who's buying?

With no other plans for leisure software, *Journey Into The Lair* is an expensive experiment, but one that has worked insomuch as it brings to light the possibilities of using laser discs for game entertainment. We wondered who is likely to buy it, and asked to Microdeal's John Symes. 'It's reasonably debatable,' he replied, 'the product is not aimed at anyone in particular, but obviously it'll be going into a a specialist area . . . either that or someone who spoils their kids rotten!'

But isn't the real problem the fact that not many homes have a laser disc player? How many have been sold in the UK?

'Roughly 50,000 units, but most of them aren't interactive, the main bulk are the cheap £70 versions that were sold three years ago. Though there are new interactive versions coming into the country this year, currently available in the States and doing well.'

Which makes for a small user base to sell to. So how are sales of the package going?

'We've been shipping *Journey To The Lair* since May – mainly on a retail basis rather than going into the shops. Actually, we are pleasantly surprised with how it's selling. But then the project has been a kind of a experiment, an adventure of our own.'

Like all prototypes, *Journey Into The Lair* paves the way for future systems. Unfortunately, Microdeal are not considering expanding on the system through additional laser discs, although they are working on an icon-driven interactive video language which could exploit the technology used in the *Lair* system.

Laser disc and ST software £99.95
Interface cable £19.95
Disc player £400-£800

Sound and graphics from the laser disc are identical to the arcade machine's





Players progress through trial and error . . . and jumping toward those flashes could be an error



Interestingly enough . . .

A *Dragon's Lair* arcade machine can be picked up from around £495, depending if it is working or not . . . According to David Piper at coin-op specialists Deeth Leisure, 'Laser players are real trouble.'

POSTE HASTE

THE GAMES MACHINE's regular Play By Mail column

This month we chronicle a popular Jade Games strategy PBM, but first a steamy It's A Crime **report from that Big Apple over the Atlantic, as the TGM B-Team pours gasoline into beer bottles**

New York, New York (so good they named it twice) is a mean, tough city with nary an apple tree in sight. But through KJC's *It's A Crime*, you can join in the street-littered, proto-Cyberpunk fun without getting fruitjuice down your front.

We've got parallel action going on here; the TGM A-Team's bid to dominate the New York chasms is on hold because of space limitations, but never fear – the B-Team, controlled by our shoot-'em-up supremo Robin Hogg, has taken the plunge in a different game.

His gang began in predictably aggressive fashion. One Pro and two 'Cruits were sent into an adjacent block and by uncapping a fire hydrant, flooded the street, doubling the gang's territory. At the same time a Punk and two other 'Cruits made judicious use of Molotov cocktails to take over that block as well. A fine start indeed. But there was a setback. Less successful were efforts to sell street dope, and buy submachine guns at an 'insultingly' low price. Once the gang does manage to get some heavy firepower, however, watch out! Its expansion rate could grow even faster.

A meeting with a former gang leader has emphasised the problems of trying to knock a gang off early – even if you win, he told them, it could easily leave you fatally vulnerable to another gang. Alternatively, playing safe – not one of Hogg's problems – could mean the gang failing to build up the resources necessary to survive the long term.

Reports in the *New York City Post* indicate arson is the favourite method of most gangs at the moment, including the tastefully named 'Yorkshire Rippers' – please send any complaints to KJC!

Next month, we will have reports from the streets on both teams, though playing different games. A-Team leader, Nik Wild, says, 'Robin's gang will never survive, because he's a suicidal nutcase.' Robin Hogg, meanwhile, claims Nik hasn't a chance, his gang's too old and deaf; that's why they're called the A-Team: 'What was that you said? Eh-Eh . . . ?'



THE CHRONICLES OF 'THE KNIGHTS OF AVALON'

Jade Games

Besides being recommended by some Poste Haste readers, this game has won awards as the second-best new game of 1987 and third-best strategy and tactical game at a recent PBM convention.

There are even two special competition games being run with TGM's sister magazine CRASH, the winner standing to receive a hand-built stone castle – albeit only 10 cubic feet big. The actual game itself includes 100,000 locations and has a special internal mail system to encourage communication between players. There's even a bimonthly newsletter carrying readers' announcements and details of occasional pub meetings. These help players by allowing trades to be arranged, which can take place over thousands of miles.



Each player begins the game as a relatively powerful knight, the lord of a province measuring 10 x 10 squares. In this province you can place a city, fort and temple. To build more settlements other provinces have to be taken over. Armies are the principal means of achieving this; five of which are supplied to every player.

A key demand of the game is keeping track of where your armies actually are – it's perfectly possible to get lost and have to disband the enemy. To move an army you write '10' – the number of the army movement order – the name of the army's general, and up to four compass directions. Alternatively scouts can be sent out to search for armies and habitable provinces. Further armies can be created, like buildings, at a cost of a few Tallons. Armies have to be maintained, though, and money to do this comes from buildings or settlements which are defended free of charge by their own garrisons.

In the drive to gain yet more territory, longboats may be required, which must be carried by armies. Care should taken – if abandoned in cities, longboats can get broken up for firewood! Other important orders allow armies to be disbanded, if lost or proving too much of a drain on resources, and for forces to be transferred between armies and settlements.

The most important part of the game, however, is probably combat. In army-to-army combat you divide the number of your platoons among five boxes representing centre, reserve and flank forces. A similar format is adopted in attacks on settlements. Occasionally useful in such battles are power cards which can be given by game entities and traded, or obtained by achieving a special position in the game. More generally trade is used to earn money to payroll yet more expansion. On the whole trade items are an investment which grow in value as turns go on. In play the game is, in fact, relatively simple compared to something like *New Order*.

The startup pack is free, with turns costing 80p for 7 orders and additional orders are 12p each. If you want to play, contact **Jade Games, *PO box 54, Southsea, Hants, PO5 1TD*.** As with *Dark Blades* turns are processed on an Atari 1040STF.

We, on the other hand, can be contacted at **POSTE HASTE, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*.**



Move over BROTHERS!!! Make way for ...
The Great Giana Sisters™
Where one famous double act stopped short, another begins, Headbutts and demons, platforms and pits – all delivered with a glamour and style that neatly disguises the cunning tricks and tantilising terrors of a couple of wild cats.
"This is one of the most addictive arcade adventures I have ever played, the gameplay is fabulous." Zzap Gold Medal.
"Having been totally addicted to the original Super Mario Bros., it is no mean feat to say that I found the Giana Sisters as compulsive." C + VG.
Screen shots from Amiga version.
A TERRIBLE TWOSOME WHO'LL STOP AT NOTHING TO SEND YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND
CBM 64/128 – £9.99t, £11.99d
Amstrad – £9.99t, £14.99d
Spectrum – £8.99t, +3 £11.99d
Atari ST – £19.99d
Amiga – £24.99d
Rainbow Arts
GO! Media Holdings Ltd., a division of U.S. Gold Ltd.
Units 2/3 Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. Tel: 021 356 3388

When you're on edge and the aliens get tough . . .

SCREAM!!!

Stick a singing alien on your head and groove with ACE and ALIEN SYNDROME

Win a singing hat, and Alien Syndrome **for 8- and 16-bit formats**

They say in space no-one can hear you scream – but play ***Alien Syndrome***, the hottest arcade conversion to come from **Ace**, the Softek International/The Edge arcade-action label, and you'll hear a different story!

Alien Syndrome hit the arcades last year, a resounding success because of its detailed graphics, giving birth to traditional hordes of marauding aliens. The game has already been converted for the Sega console, but it is the home computer versions which really capture the magic and excitement of the coin-op original.

Alien Syndrome's action is set in five space stations, viewed from overhead, overrun by genetic experiments that went wrong – aliens! They've captured scientists and set a time bomb to blow each level apart. Enter and defeat them, fail and scream yourself to death. The conversion is as accurate as possible for each computer, maintaining the high graphical standard and immense playability of its arcade counterpart. In short, it's great.

So then, how do you fancy getting one for free, from **Ace**? Of course you do, and how about winning a unique singing alien hat? Can you stand it? The singing alien is really a baseball hat equipped with a built-in radio and headphones topped off with a swish *Alien Syndrome* logo. The hat is part of the first prize along with a copy of the game on any of its formats (Spectrum, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST and Amiga). For 25 runners-up there are copies of the game too.

To win one of the prizes spot all TEN differences in the pictures below, cut out the coupon, fill in your name, address and required format and send it to: **ALIEN SYNDROME COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB***. All entries must reach TGM HQ by August 18 and entrants must also abide by the competition rules as detailed in the masthead or be fed to the green wobbly monsters on Level One.



PICTURE A

PICTURE B

Name ....

Address ....

.... Postcode ....

Computer owned ....

CONFRONTATION: COIN-OP

With Robin Hogg, pictures by Cameron Pound and thanks to Alan and Avril at Sunspot, Manchester

SLOT NEWS

TAITO is rapidly becoming unstoppable with the revolutionary 3-D racing game ***Continental Circus***. Already the largest European order ever has been made for it and **Electrocoin**, one of the UK's larger amusement machine manufacturers, is beginning one of the biggest ever production runs for a coin-op. A full report next month.

Data East, lacking a real success since *Kung Fu Master* – the game responsible for spawning plague of beat-'em-ups on arcades, consoles and home computers – could recreate that success soon with ***Dragon Ninja***, soon on general UK release. Some extra elements make it worth a look.

SNK will soon have ***Chopper 1*** and ***Gold Medallist*** in the arcades to take your money. The latter game is just in time for the Seoul Olympics and will bring back all those (painful) memories of *Hypersports, Track And Field* and joystick waggling. Most events have been seen before, such as swimming, 100m sprint, discus and long jump, but events like boxing and high bar are new.

In the States, **Atari** has a new video game titled ***Toobin***. It's a race game set in a tube moving along a river, with missiles and crocodiles to avoid and gates to negotiate. It looks likely that the game will reach the UK by the end of the year.

Finally we move north to Britain's Number One place for entertainment: Blackpool. The famous Pleasure Beach there has recently opened The Avalanche, the first bobsleigh run in the UK. The massive ride has taken a year to construct and it's now ready in time for the summer season. One million-plus visitors are expected to use the ride this year and we'll take a further look at it in a future issue of TGM.

P47 FREEDOM FIGHTER

Jaleco

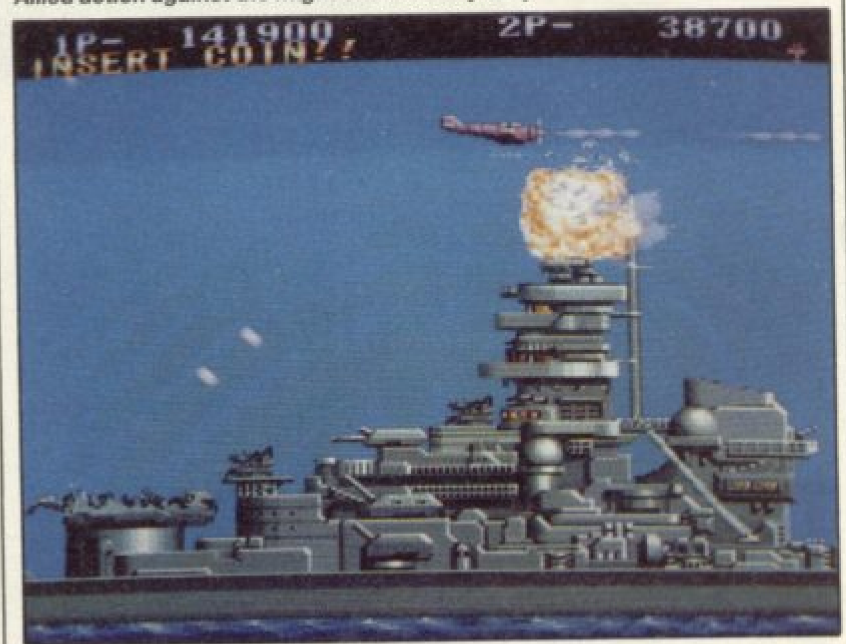
From all the coin-ops this month, this two-player aerial shoot-'em-up gave me the most pleasure. It doesn't have particularly outstanding graphics, the sound is kept in moderation and it doesn't break any new boundaries, but it's simple, great fun to play and cash-drainingly addictive!

Over northern France, one or two Allied fighter/bombers fly above enemy-occupied regions, dropping bombs on guns, tanks and enemy positions, while shooting down oncoming squadrons of bombers, missiles and fighters. Strains of *Nemesis* emerge in the capsules left behind by destroyed waves of enemy aircraft. The now-standard (ie unoriginal) end-of-level opponents include a long train armed to the proverbial teeth with guns and antiair cannon, a hideously large Tiger tank, behemoth bombers and other multiple-hits-required enemies.

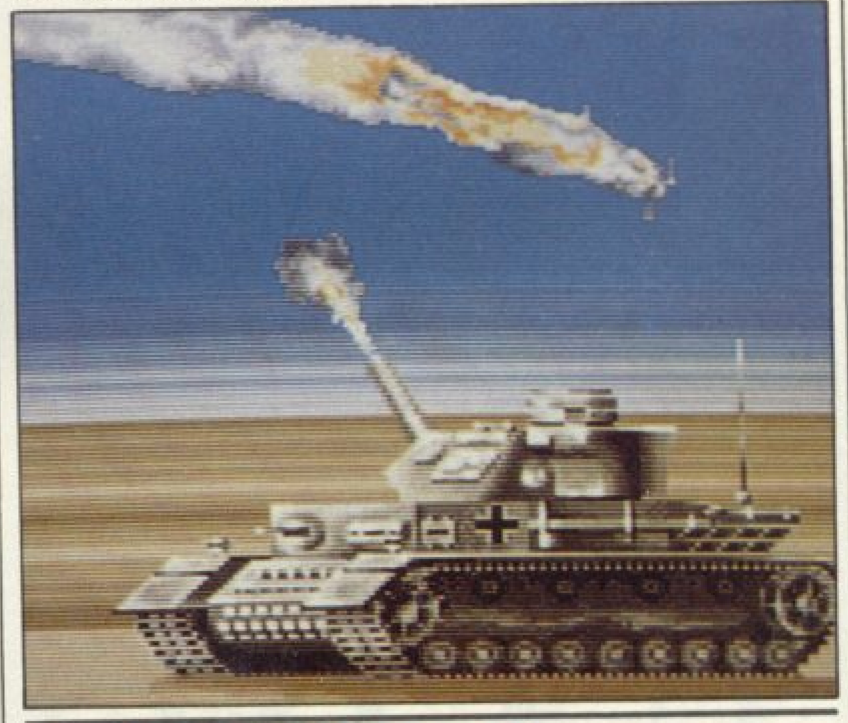
P47 Freedom Fighter's attraction lies in its simple shoot-'em-up nature, if there's any justice in this world, the game will be a resounding success; unlikely though, because it doesn't have flash graphics, built-in hydraulics, speech and, most importantly, it isn't produced by Atari, Taito or Sega. Nevertheless, I'll be going back to it again and again as it's an enjoyably unpretentious coin-op.



Hogg's pick of the month: splendid graphics, lurid action in **P47 Freedom Fighter**



Allied action against the might of the enemy navy

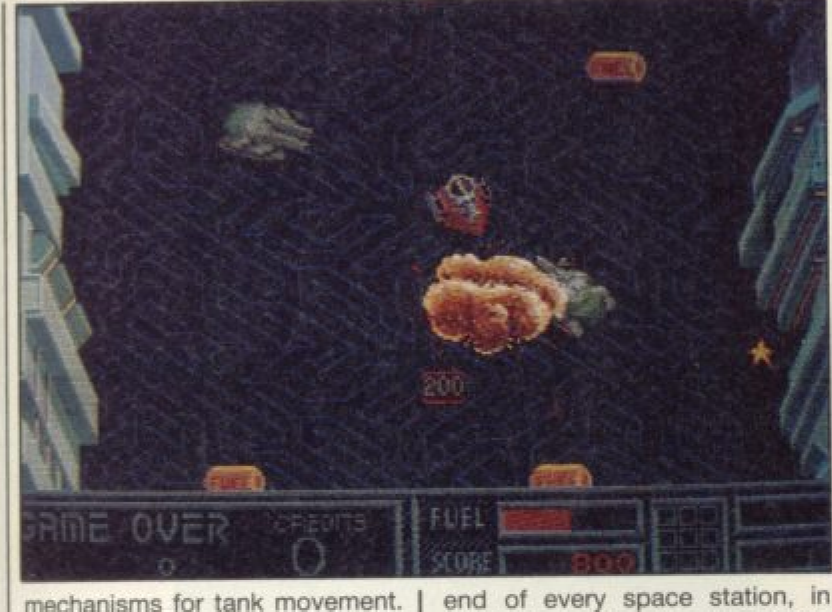

Advancing into North Africa

VINDICATORS

Atari

Vindicate: 1a. *to provide justification for,* 1b. *to maintain the existence of,* 1c. *to uphold* – that's what the dictionary says, but Atari's latest machine is more vindictive than vindicative.

Once again they have taken ideas from their own ancient machines and written a hit game around them. Reworked this time is *Battlezone*, the tank controls and general game idea having worked their way into this 1988 version. Atari have taken the futuristic, eye-catching cabinet of *Xybots* and replaced the controls with paddle-like steering



mechanisms for tank movement. These take a little getting used to but *Battlezone* veterans shouldn't have any problems.

Viewed from above, one or two players control a future tank progressing through three zones in space stations scattered throughout the galaxy in a bid to find the exit before the fuel runs out. Three types of enemy tanks are out to stop the Vindicators, three types of gun turrets spin round and lock onto the tank to blow it away, grid runners, electric poles and homing mines also appear in later zones.

There's a bonus screen at the end of every space station, in which the tank has to get out in ten seconds before the station explodes. Fuel and bonuses can be collected here but don't hang about! Once through, it's onto the next station with wall guns to avoid, lava chasms to cross, more complex station layouts, less fuel pods, more tanks and other foes.

Keys open doors to the next level, fuel lies scattered around each zone and collecting stars gives the player resource points with which the tank can be customised at the end of each zone à la *Xybots*. Resource points can be expended to buy increased shot power, increased shot range, tank speed, extra shields or a turret/gun rotation facility – you can face one direction and fire in another, tricky to control but well worth forking out the resource points for.

Despite usual Atari presentation – excellent sound, high-quality graphics, striking cabinet design and excellent speech – the actual game is shallow.



Combining Xybots *and* Battlezone *in Atari's* Vindicators

F-1 DREAM

Capcom

While we wait for *LED Storm*, *Forgotten Worlds* and *Last Duel*, Capcom fill in with this racing game. It's the Grand Prix season and in a Formula One car very similar to Nigel Mansell's Williams, you participate against computer-driven cars on four multiway-scrolling Grand Prix circuits seen from overhead.



The small Formula One car allows for more screen manoeuvrability

A qualfication lap establishes your starting grid placing. Once in the race, turn on the turbo and work your way through to first position and keep there. Hairpin bends, the other cars and rapidly worn tyres pose race problems.

F-1 Dream doesn't aim to be anything above its station; the gameplay is addictively simple, the graphics are more functional than overwhelming in detail, so's colour and animation. In fact, the game is visually very low-key. What it does have, though, is good playability, with simple controls (although the turbo buttons combination is awkward to achieve at first) and generally a fun atmosphere pervading the whole.



The overhead Grand Prix circuits of Capcom's* F1-Dream *as the start gets under way

RALLY BIKE

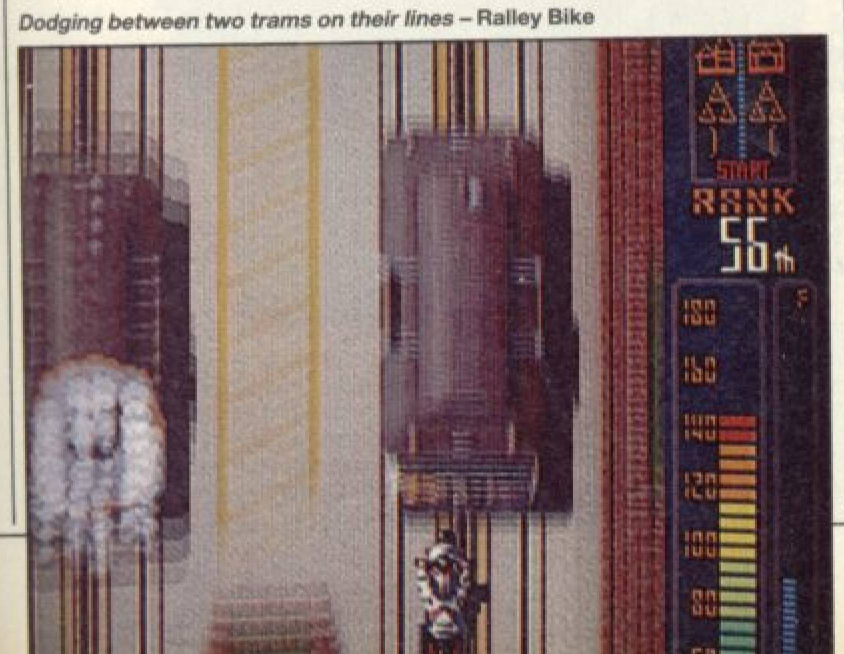
Taito

Become an endurance motorbike rider in Taito's latest vertically-scrolling motorbike racing game. *Rally Bike* is played through five cities, along the seaside straights of San Francisco and Los Angeles, onto Phoenix in Arizona, Boston and eventually through to the alleyways and freeways of New York.

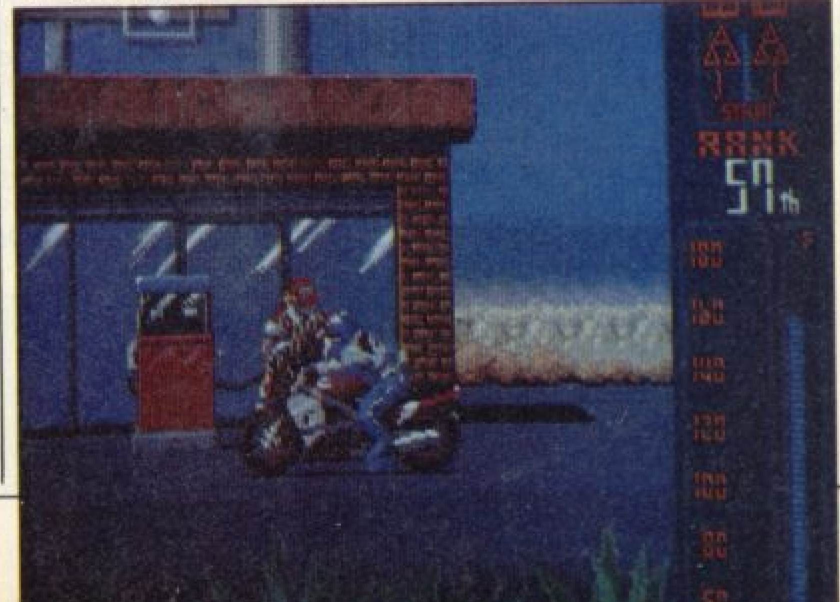
The Rally Bike, viewed from above, wends through each city, while trains and trams charge straight at you, trucks try and bash you off the road and bikers swerve all over the place. Typical Sunday driving really. A helicopter flies overhead dropping crates containing bonus items: a turbo for the bike, boost score and attached guardian bikers on each side of the vehicle protecting the bike from hazards along the route. Fuel is perpetually drained. Stopping off at gas stations tops up the tanks, but knocks you down a couple of places in the race.

Rally Bike rides along at a sensibly moderate pace, the length of the screen together with the small bike gives freedom of movement and sufficient warning of obstacles ahead. This all changes for the worse with later cities, less and less room is available on the roads, the rival bikers get faster and the road layouts get worse. On the Los Angeles section, a truck taking up the entire road proves almost impassable, but the continue-play option solves this otherwise very awkward, unfair problem. *Rally Bike* sports some slick, varied, nicely defined graphics, great presentation together with easy-to-get-into, simple gameplay, Taito certainly know how to inject life into their coin-ops.

***Dodging between two trams on their lines* – Ralley Bike**



'Fill 'er up, and make it snappy!



WIN A MASSIVE SWATCH WATCH!

and more Swatches and games!

perfectly timed prizes from



Time will never stand still for you again once you're the winner of a massive Swatch watch courtesy of **Ocean** – unlike the four adventurers in **Ocean**'s epic arcade adventure quest ***Where Time Stood Still*** written by **Denton Designs**. Reviewed this issue, ***Where Time Stood Still*** proves to be another winner from **Ocean**, coming in at 95% (page 45).

The game details the adventures of a quartet who, after a disastrous plane crash, find themselves stranded on a remote Himalayan plateau – where time stood still. The barren wasteland is inhabited by prehistoric creatures in search of a man-sized snack. The object of the game . . . ? to get out ALIVE!

Where Time Stood Still is graphically reminiscent of **Denton Designs**'s earlier game, *The Great Escape*, with a multidirectional scrolling landscape in monochrome. Tyrannosaurus Rex, pterodactyls, swamp creatures and many other prehistoric foes make up the monster pack in ***Where Time Stood Still***, due for release on Spectrum 128K and Atari ST. Forget about the creatures for a moment and concentrate on the questions below – they could win you a giant Swatch Watch Wall Clock measuring almost seven feet in length. The clock is part of the **first prize** along with a wrist-sized Swatch and a copy of ***Where Time Stood Still*** on either Spectrum 128K or Atari ST. For five **second-prize** winners there's a Swatch and the game; ten runners-up each get a copy of the game. Send your entries on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope along with your address – and don't forget to state which computer you own – to **WTSS COMP, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive by **August 18**.

1 A stitch in time saves . . . what?
(a) lime, (b) nine, (c) putting the cat out

2 At the beginning of *Where Time Stood Still*, which character takes charge of the stranded passengers?
(a) Jarrett, (b) Jarett, (c) Jarret

3 Which of these titles was not written by Denton Designs?
(a) The Great Escape, (b) Frankie Goes To Hollywood, (c) Magnetron

For comparison: the wrist-sized Swatch and the Swatch Clock

GOING RIGHT OVERBOARD

Trouble is brewing down under, there's a mutated spider in space, four world-powers are hunting for microfilm and you've got to kiss the belly-button of the player to your right. There is no cause for alarm, it's just another installment of boardgames . . .

EVERYBODY NEEDS GOOD ONES

As we go to press, Scott's newspaper serial has caused Des and Daphne to separate, while turning Mrs Mangle into a nervous wreck – and Charlene has lost her job. Meanwhile, Rosemary has discovered that her mother, Helen Daniels, is having an affair with her fiancé . . .

Sound familiar? It's *Neighbours* – pinnacle of daytime television. At last a boardgame has been based on the ups and downs of the folk in Ramsay Street – so now you can involve yourself in *Neighbours* 24 hours a day.

The game should be in the shops as you read this. Released by **Crown & Andrews** (*Brit Quiz* and *Dare*), it features all the soap's characters. The aim of the game is to travel around the board building up a script with action and script cards, manipulating the plot with every move.

'The beauty of ***The Neighbours Game***,' say Crown & Andrews, 'is that you don't have to be familiar with the TV series to play, although it does provide slightly more entertainment value if you know the basics of the programme.'

The Neighbours Game is priced at £11.99 and we'll be reviewing it next month.

Random House, the giant American book publisher, recently entered the toys and games field with success, and is now turning to the UK market. The launch product, ***Quizard***, combines a traditional general knowledge/specialist quiz game with an electronic umpire (looking like a mutated spider) complete with flashing lights and buzzers. Having chosen a set of questions from one of three books of ascending difficulty – Wizard, Champion or Master – the players compete to answer questions either by hitting a buzzer before the electronic umpire designates time-up or by being buzzed to answer. *Quizard*, which should appeal to all ages, sells for £22.50.

ESPIONAGE

Espionage Ltd, £12.95, 2-4 players

Originally devised in 1984, *Espionage* is rereleased this summer. As well as being treated to a massive dose of marketing hype, conversions for all major computer formats is in hand by **Grandslam Entertainments** – check it out at the Personal Computer Show (Earls Court, September 16-18.)

Espionage is a strategic spying game in which opponents look to attack each other at every opportunity, and become Master Spy. To achieve this acclaimed status, players must pick up one or all four rolls of microfilm placed at the centre of the board and return to their base camp.



Espionage ***comes in from the cold***

To accomplish the operation players each have a 12-strong spy team comprising six courier agents, four secret agents and two surveillance agents. Defence and attack elements are carried out by the surveillance agents, while couriers and secret agents manoeuvre the microfilm. All three types have different movement patterns (similar to chess pieces) and how to use them to the best advantage is learned during play.

Attacking other players is a relatively simple operation – if in line with a member of the opposition and there is a free square behind it, an attack can take place. Money is handed out at the beginning and as you eliminate opposing players a cash reward is given, similarly a reward is given for retrieving the microfilm.

The winner is the first person to collect all four microfilms or the player with the most cash when all four microfilms have been captured.

The verdict

There are no dice involved in *Espionage*, it's purely a strategy skill game – only to be played when your mind is in gear. The rules are clear, intricately explained and include diagrams describing sets of classic moves. *Espionage* will take several games to get to grips with as players learn to make situations work to their best advantage, but having mastered the basics, there's a fascinating and enthralling game to be discovered.

ICEBREAKER

Brainless Games Ltd, £19.95, 4 or more players

Sam Lal and Anne Powell devised *Icebreaker* last year as a spontaneous idea to save a party from falling apart at the seams. Now with a grant from the Department Of Employment, they are marketing it through their own company, Brainless Games.

The rules are incredibly simple – they have to be for a drunken party game – and entertainment is the aim. On the throw of a dice players travel around the board following the instructions on the squares as they land on them. There are penalty sections – 'Take a drink' appears regularly, as do forfeits. The forfeit sections instruct the player to take a green, red, blue or yellow card and carry out the instructions printed thereon. The forfeits range from sticking five coins up yer bum (with clothes on) and walking the length of the room to suck on a baby's dummy (provided in the packaging). By the time the game is in full swing, players are hopefully sufficiently intoxicated to make it immaterial how silly the forfeits are. Be warned, some of them get very personal . . .

Scoring points is achieved by performing the forfeits, the winner is the first one to top 2,500. As this usually takes two-and-a-half hours, a smaller win score can be decided on at the beginning.



A party game for long late nights

The verdict

Well packaged, *Icebreaker* comes with all the essentials you need to play it: the dummy, a length of rope (?), tape measure and toenail clippers. The board is sturdy so there's no need worry about spilling drinks over it. It has to be played as a late-night party game when all concerned are in the right frame of mind. *Icebreaker* is immense fun and an original and a daring product which has been well put together – it comes highly recommended from Ludlow party goers.

MAKE MINE MSX



Heavily committed to MSX? Fed-up with reading about the latest music software for everything but your system? OK This is YOUR article, as Jon Bates gives you the story behind music and MSX

Easy-time rhythms from MSX maestro Jon Bates – and yes, he does put his feet up on the furniture at home

The Japanese are not noted for fast one-line answers. Instead they observe, retreat, think and do lots of sums, consult with upper and lower management, and only then cautiously stick a toe in the water. The initial launch of MSX in the United Kingdom was a similar process.

The system as you know is well-thought out. Programs are usually stored in ROM cartridges which slot in the top just like games consoles. The big thing is that it doesn't matter what make of MSX you have, the program runs on it. The set launch period was Christmas 1984 and there was a fair amount of pre-launch publicity surrounding it dating back to the late-summer of 1983. 'Fourteen manufacturers all committed to the same standard . . . 64K RAM . . . 32K ROM . . . uses Micro Soft extended basic . . .' etc. The only notable question mark was that the machines were still using the Z80 central processor which many felt not to be a step in the right direction as it was already quite old and had been superseded in the micro market (Clive Sinclair was quoted as saying that MSX 'froze technology and software where it would be more profitable to look ahead'.)

Anyway as the launch date neared it was easy to spot that most of the manufacturers were having second thoughts about the UK market. Only three main manufacturers had pushed their campaign past the point of no-return on the runway and were committed to take off: Toshiba, Sony and Yamaha. Since this *is* the music page and not a history lesson it is with the latter I shall concern myself.

No easy rider

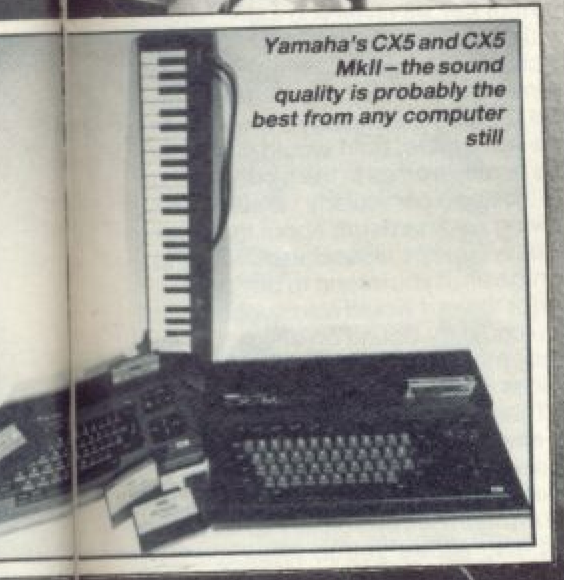
In Europe Yamaha are known primarily for motor bikes and secondly for musical instruments. Looking at the company prospectus – the global issue that is – a rather different picture emerges. Motor bikes are only a minor part of their operation. Like many Japanese corporations, they have spread sideways and are really in the business of leisure commodities, to which end the manufacture of instruments fits in very nicely, not to mention the skis, golf clubs, furniture, yachts, holiday centres, and even hotels and bathroom suits (a rep from a rival company once told of the symbolic joy he experienced whenever he used the bathroom in one of their hotels!)

"The CX5 sound quality is probably the best from any computer still"

Mr Yamaha started off 101 years ago as a manufacturer of a type of harmonium (a pedalled wind-blown reed organ) and it was only during the Fifties that they got into electronics. Now they are the world's largest manufacturer of musical instruments and just for the record the last three years has seen them move significantly in the UK with a take-over of what was their original agency outlet, the opening of a company shop in London, the take-over of one of Britain's oldest and best known manufacturer of drums, and I would guess future expansion into actual assembly and manufacture over here. Computers fit well into this structure.

First reports from the Japan computer fair of March 1984 even caught the UK agency on the hop, which lead to one amusing phone conversation I had with one of the directors who was trying to conceal his lack of information by quoting from the very same article that I had in front of me. The model emerged as the CX5 and made its appearance in October of that year. Basically it is, of course, just the same as all the other MSX machines, and has 32K for you to play around with. However, what it had, already bolted on underneath, was a





Yamaha's CX5 and CX5 MkII – the sound quality is probably the best from any computer still

tone module, known as an SFG01. Inside this were an FM chip and a ROM program.

The FM (frequency modulation) chip was of the same sort that powered the smaller DX synthesizers, using only four operators to create sound rather than the six on the DX7. However, it was multitimbral. This means that it had the ability to make more than one sound at the same time. More of this later. To complete the package, you got a plug-in keyboard with a port not unlike a BBC printer configuration, MIDI-in and MIDI-out ports, and stereo left and right outputs. This was a first, the only computer to have these built in at the time.

No joke chips

This package of CX5 plus keyboard and software was launched with a starting price of a staggering £599. No disk drive or printer. Educational establishments were quick to pick up on its enormous potential, and the CX5 sound quality is probably the best from any computer still. Well it would be, as many micros still use a joke chip for internal sound.

Looking back, the original set-up had some odd quirks. The MIDI was fairly dumb as it would only allow you to output when using the full potential of the FM chip. To use both MIDI-in and out meant that you couldn't access the FM chip. Come to think of it, why on earth sell a MIDI-equipped computer with separate non-compatible keyboard, other than to paper over a large crack in the design?

Without any extra cartridges, you could call up, (by the rather obvious command of CALL MUSIC), a resident music program that turned the keyboard into a self-accompanying instrument. Sounds were chosen from an internal memory of 46 voices which, on reflection, are not the best examples of FM programming I have come across. It had routines that gave you auto bass lines plus chords and could record what you performed into the memory. However the drums for this function were taken from the standard MSX sound chip and so were atrocious in comparison with the FM voices. Quite frankly I wish they had not bothered.

Let's have a look at Yamaha's ROM cartridge software. Throughout I shall be quoting the catalogue numbers as often this is how they are quoted in adverts. Another point to remember is that only the programs that start with the number '5' or '3' are disk-compatible.

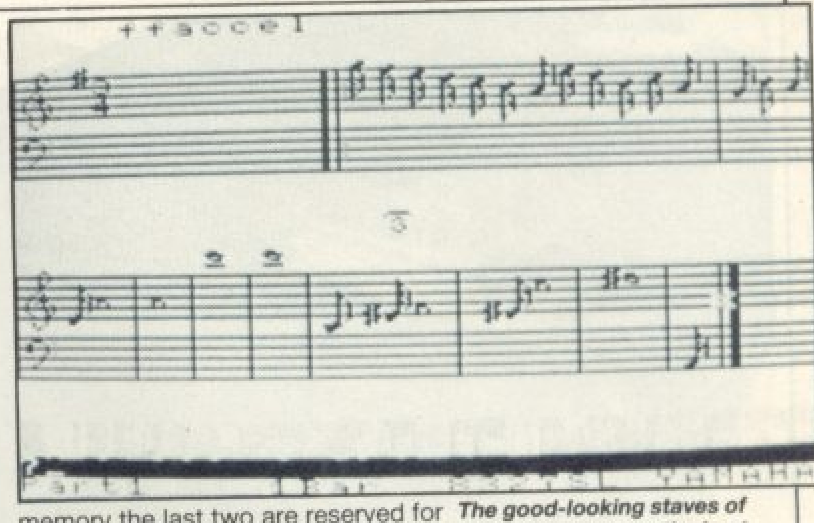
No swap for beer

First of all is the step-time program called the *Music Composer*. This has appeared in two versions and the Mk 1 has the prefix YRM 101, the Mk 2 being YRM 501. Mk 2 has a few refinements but essentially they are the same beast.

For me it is the best step-time program that I have ever worked with. For anyone who has a bit of musical knowledge it is a doddle to work with as all the commands are musical terms and I found that if I wasn't sure I could nearly guess the command. Step-time is a pain at the best of times, but this does have a rather clever idea in that if you want, the note entry can be a one-handed operation. You hold down the note you want on the keyboard and the cursor on-screen runs around the note values; release the note when the cursor is on the one you want and the note appears on screen. You don't even have to have a keyboard because the notes can be entered from the QWERTY keys.

The program commands up to eight monophonic lines simultaneously, all with individual dynamics and accents using the internal voices. Sounds and MIDI channels can be changed with the frequency of socks and it has lots of memory-saving repeat and return signs, just like real music – musicians have always been super idle when it comes to putting pen to paper. The rub is that the screen only displays one line at a time and in practice that means that more complex compositions have to be sketched out first. As well as the 46 voices resident in the tone module you can load up another set of either your own or professional making.

Accessing these is always a bind as the program numbers the new voices consequently from the resident set: 'Er . . . add 48 to 48 and work out what new voice 23 is now'. (There are 48 voice slots but in the resident memory the last two are reserved for some now never-to-be-discovered 'future application'. One nag factor with this program is that the printout is rather tiny: a high-res screen dump which does nothing for real printing of music and is pretty well novelty value only. Nonetheless, I wouldn't trade mine in for all the beer in Ludlow – well almost.



The good-looking staves of Music Composer – the best ever step-time program

No exaggeration

In the original package of programs there was a rather strange program called *Music Macro* (YRM104 and YRM504) which was supposed to enable computer whizos to write music in the form of a program. In practice this program stayed on the shelves of the dealers as it was really far too slow and besides which, the CX5 was marketed through music dealers who found it as much use as a handbrake on a canoe.

The real fun starts with the voicing program (YRM102 and YRM504) for the internal FM chip. For the first time you could see the FM system graphically displayed with sideways-on bar graphs. I could never understand why they chose this – it would have made much more sense swizzed through 90°, as you could then see the sound envelope as it should be. Also available was the first program anywhere for voicing the DX7, (YRM103) using the same bar graphs but spread over two pages to cram all the information in.

Nowadays I have voicing programs coming out of my ears – well let's say that quite a few float into THE GAMES MACHINE office – but it would be no exaggeration to say that despite the age and the fact that these were pioneering programs, they are still very easy and simple to use. Quick on the heels of these were the DX9 voicing program (YRM105), RX drum machine editor (YRM 302) and DX21 voicing program (YRM305).

Yamaha also scored with one of the first MIDI recorders to hit the mass market with the catalogue number of YRM301. Although quite simple in comparison with the 16-bit programs like the Steinberg that are now commonplace, it's certainly worth having. I still find it a useful tool and one that I can configure material on very quickly. The quantization is quite basic, but it does have an easy graphic display and punch-in and out features coupled with editing that make it quite a bargain at its original purchase price of £35. It's mouse compatible, chains files and sections of songs and supports the disk interface as well as cassette.

"Music Composer **is the best step-time program that I have ever worked with**"



Bolt-on MIDI, seen on the underside of the CX5

No keyboard notes

Yamaha launched a follow up to the original CX5 with 128K of memory to go at. It was named with a remarkable lack of originality the CX5 Mk II (*not* to be confused with MSX-II.) All the original programs ran on it but there were also revamps of the step-time composer and the voicing program was now contained in a third slot under the front of the keyboard and could be accessed at any time. However, due to the memory configuration (the Yamaha MSX system?) many MSX games and utilities would not run on this machine and Yamaha had to refund money when users complained of the CX5 MkII's lack of compatibility on what was supposed to be a compatible system.

The Mk 2 had vastly improved MIDI capabilities with in and out running on pretty well full strength so that voices loaded could be accessed via MIDI and the step-time did not require the dinky keyboard to enter the notes as it would accept MIDI in. The musical improvements were mainly due to the upgraded FM module, the SFG05. The most striking difference was its ability to respond to MIDI-in (hooray) and to be able to split and layer voices. It was velocity-sensing and also disk compatible. The disk drives were a formidable price – about £250 – and to make matters worse used a non-standard interface plugged into one of the two cartridge slots on top of the computer. The good news was that you could buy the tone modules separately. Most MSX machines, with slight adaptation, could be used with the module. All you did was make or buy a small interface board which in effect was a male-slot-to-male-slot converter.

Because of its improved MIDI capabilities, the SFG05 acts as an expander for any MIDI set up. It's a very cheap way of getting into MIDI and FM sounds if you already own an MSX machine. The most suitable machines for the expander module to bolt on to are the Sony 'Hit Bit' and the Cannon V20. Others can be adapted, but they require a little more fiddle and bodging before the module interfaces, and then it may be balanced at a precarious angle unless you opt for ribbon connectors – the superior solution anyway. If you are thinking of doing this, contact Yamaha. They may be able to sell you the interface board – to get it to work you do really need to know which slots connect to which.

"Yamaha had to refund money when users complained of the CX5 MkII's lack of compatibility"

No stock left

And now for the bad news. Yamaha no longer supports MSX. With the demise of MSX-I, Yamaha decided to pull out of MSX, at least in Europe. I have several spies who assure me that they have used Yamaha MSX-II systems in the Far East; I believe it may even have the name of CX7. Certainly they have some system, but it doesn't look like we shall see it. (Rumour has it they are stitching up deals with software houses, mainly for the Atari, which will apply to some of their more exotic products.

However, the second-hand market for the CX and tone modules is quite healthy and represents a very low-cost entry into both MSX and music. Armed with a higlighter pen, telephone plus a few appropriate second-hand columns it shouldn't take you very long to track one down around the £150 to £200 area. If you already own an MSX machine, you will also see tone modules floating to the surface for really silly prices – they weren't that expensive initially, about £70 – so get looking. There are still dealers with unsold stock on the shelves too, and they will gladly get rid of it at less than cost price now. Don't bother to phone Yamaha to see if they have any MSX gear left in stock, they haven't.

No lack of software

Other Yamaha software that you may come across includes educational programs such as chord finders for keyboards and guitar, chord progression teachers, 'Playcard' readers – that's the music that has a magnetic data strip attached to it for 'easyplay' learning – and an auto arranger which is somewhere between a write-it yourself tune package and an auto accompanier in the manner of a single keyboard. Some of the later software also supports a mouse.

There are voice programmers for the DX series, rhythm pattern programmers for the RX Drum series and quite a few tapes around with voices for the CX FM chip.

Independent software is still available. There are 8- and 16-track MIDI recorder packages from DMS who also have other goodies like expander cartridges as well.

There are various 'off-the-shelf' sets of voices for the CX5, and the seal of approval certainly goes to the set from Moscow Music, which for the sum of £17.99 gives you 432 different sounds arranged in groups: orchestral, synth sounds and conversions of the pick of voices from the DX range. Generally a few sounds are not usable, but I would single out the analog voices in the synth section as being particularly lifelike and having a warm depth about them that usually is not associated with FM synthesis. If you intend to buy one set, go for these. I would also suggest that you could try Sound on Vision as they also market a reasonable tape of voices.

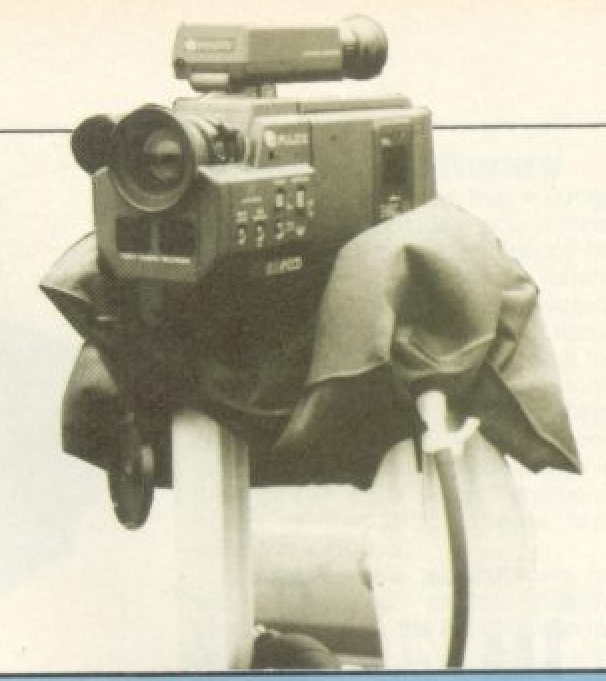
There are other programs available to enable you to formulate these into usable libraries. There is also a rather interesting bi-timbral program call *Bitz* which lines up voices into libraries but also allows you to layer sounds and detune them rather in the manner of the more expensive DX range. All configurations can be saved. I should point out that most of these applications are available on tape and sometimes disk. However for disk it's better to have the CX5 Mk 2.

The official line from Yamaha is that they were forced to stop importing the CX series of computers because of the demise of the MSX system in the United Kingdom. However, it's certainly worth contacting them for they run a newsletter X-Press which will keep you up to date about what software is still available for the CX series. It is interesting to wonder what will happen should MSX become firmly established as a games format.

Next month: a return to normality with reviews of voicing packages and a composition program of exceptional intelligence known as *M*.

For further information on MSX and CX software contact:
Yamaha Kemble, *Mount Farm, Bletchley MK1 1JE*, ☎ 0908 71771
DMS, ***182 Wilmslow Road, Heald Green, Cheshire SK8 3BG***, **☎ 061 436 4799**
Moscow Music, ***29 Ferguson Avenue, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5LX***
Sound On Vision, ***113 Bonchurch Road, Brighton, Sussex BN2 3PJ***, **☎ 0273 6877059**
Bitz* – available through Yamaha or from D Pearce, *9 Lansdowne Court, Lansdowne Gardens, Ramsey, Hampshire SO51 0FB

GISMO VIDEO



Gismos and sinister-looking black boxes are only part of the confusing range of add-ons for anyone who wants to spice up their home-grown videos. Some are ludicrously cheap and effective, others horribly expensive and practically useless – it takes Mel Croucher to sort the sheet from the goats

Ask yourself this before you invest in any video add-ons: is your purchase going to enhance your work by tarting up the visual image or is it going to ruin it? I was watching *The Singing Detective* last night, which has won every award going. It is visually superb. On replaying it, I listed the following video techniques: number of cuts, 306; number of fades, three; number of wipes, zero; number of camera special effects, zero; number of zooms, seven; number of scrolls, one. In other words the greatest impacts were achieved by simplicity. For most of your needs you can forget about vision mixers and distracting effects – what you need is a simple cable to copy short scenes from a camcorder or a VCR to another video. It doesn't matter what sort of connecting plugs your machines happen to have: all leads come in a choice of two types, an extension lead or a copying lead. The extension type passes a signal from a pin at one end to the same pin at the other, but the copying lead mirrors the signal. It sends signals from Audio-In to Audio-Out and Video-In to Video-Out, and this is the type you want.

YUPPIE ACCESSORIES

In the world of computing, it's difficult to know whether to laugh or cry sometimes when I come across the sort of accessory dreamed up by an enthusiastic woodlouse. In videoville things are much the same.

JESSOP VARI CUSHION, £16.95
What a naff idea! A whoopee cushion for camcorders! Looking like a giant enema, this rubber inflatable is supposed to act as a rest for your camcorder in 'unlikely situations'. You pump it up until it gets nice and squishy, plonk it on the nearest 'unlikely situation' (a dwarf, spiked railings, a spiked dwarf?) and support your camera in its mobile embrace. I have always found a tripod does the job very well, or failing that a simple device that you can usually find just below the head which I will call 'the shoulder'.

LONGREACH 'STEADY READY CAM', £39.95
A highly effective wobble-eliminator, for mobile camera work. This one wouldn't seem out of place in a sex shop window; designed to hug into your neck and grip your breast, it offers hands-free support for most camcorders. Nice idea, tacky name though.

VIDEO ANORAK, Cherished Videos, £24.95
Designer raincoats for camcorders, what will they think of next (wellies for your tripod, funeral services for dead battery packs)? These made-to-measure camera coats only leave the lens and eyepiece exposed, which is jolly useful for all you out there who can control your machine's wee buttons by telepathy. If you want to film in the rain, save yourself grief and nearly 25 quid by doing what I do – wrap the damn thing in clingfilm!

VIDEO TITLERS

Many camcorders now have on-board titling facilities, but they are limited in scope and once the titles are superimposed on video you cannot erase them, which causes problems in editing. Fortunately, titling is very simple when you use add-ons.



SUPERINTRO, Hall Video Productions, £15.00
Got an old 48K/128K Spectrum knocking around? Then have I got news for you. This cheap little lump of software is bloody marvellous! Titles in four different fonts, fade or wipe of text and/or graphics, scrolls, splits, dissolves, auto timing, come on now! For 15 quid this has got to be a bargain.

VIDEO TITLES 64, MRVP Ltd, £39.99
Even better news if you possess a Commodore 64, this video title program is smooth as Bob Monkhouse in butter. Complete with a cable for direct video connection, it offers variable scroll speeds, instant cuts between titles, and a choice of 16 colours, but the fonts are very limited. Mind you, any half-decent programmer can do wonders with it. Compared to the extortionate prices asked for clip-on titlers for camcorders, both this and the Superintro utility are excellent value for money, and a doddle to use.

BAUER VTG-1000 CHARACTER GENERATOR, £316.00
Four type fonts, scroll, 20-page memory, curtain and fades. Yes folks, for an extra 300 quid, this does everything that the last two do. Which way to the funny farm?

TAKING THE MIKE

In my recent survey of camcorders, one problem cropped up time and time again: cruddy sound. The whirr of the zoom-servos, intimate sniffs and swears from the camera operator and the omnidirectional built-in mike picking up everything but the sound you really want. Unidirectional mikes are the answer, the type of plug-in device that looks more like a cattle-prod covered in a foam sheath.

GUN MICROPHONE, The Widescreen Centre, £39.50
You get what you pay for, and while this looks like the mikes listed below, the sound quality is poor.

AUDIO-TECHNICA 9300 'SHOTGUN', £55.95
Complete with a converter for general purpose use, foam windshield and sexy pistol grip, this mike focuses in on sound sources a bit like a zoom lens. Audio quality is acceptable, but nothing to write home about.

SONY ECM-K120, £79.30
An electret condenser boom mike, with three settings for narrow beam, uni and omni. Pinpoint accuracy up to about 50 feet, with a very good dynamic range.

SENHEISER ME-88, £142.00
Oh yeah! I mean, this is a superb piece of kit! Professional quality, broadcast standard results, and capable of picking up a sparrow fart at a hundred paces! If you are serious about location recording this is the mike for you. Even the carrying case is a joy to unzip.

FADER/MIXER JUNGLE

Ah well, if you won't listen to my comments about cuts being better than fades and wipes, you are welcome to waste your money on a host of machines that will transform your videos into a gimmick-infested buttock pain.



VAF Mk3, ACT Electronics, £24.95
No frills cheapo, no frills result. Fade to black.

VPC-1000, Video Tech, £79.00
It's been around since 1986, and I still can't fault it. Mind you, it only does one thing for your visual image: fade to black at any speed.

VIVANCO VCR-2044, £179.00
Cheap and cheerful, with a pair of yummy Starship Enterprise fader levers, this machine would be fine except for one thing: there's no brilliance control. This makes it as useful as the famous knitted condom.

VEC-2000, Video Tech, £185.00
Highly recommended. Automatic fades to white or black, two dozen wipe patterns, an extra video output for duplication (and how sensible that is!), three-channel audio, and a nice robust casing. Simple and effective.

VIVANCO VCR-3044, £279.00
Four yummy fader levers this time, and the all-important brilliance control too. With luck you may be able to hire this baby from your video shop.

SANSUI VX-00, £499.90 recommended retail price, but discounted to £299.95
Unlimited wipe patterns, window facilities, and a host of useless special effects labelled with the magic word 'digital'. You know those naff adverts for local boutiques that you get at the cinema? They use stuff like this.

ENHANCERS

If you have video footage with perfect content but lousy definition, all is not lost. Video enhancers can cure sick tapes, or at least slap on a few bandages. Cheap they are not!

VIVANCO 1044, £69.99

Allows you to fritz about with the contrast and sharpness, with the useful addition of noise reduction when all those snow-patterns ruin the soundtrack. By using the bypass switch you can get a 'before and after' image by plugging in two monitors, which is very useful.

JVC JX-C7, £270.00 recommended retail price, discounted to £225.00

A combi-machine, featuring a video image enhancer, colour corrector and stereo sound mixer. The JVC takes images from two simultaneous sources ranging from clapped-out VCRs to video discs, and joystick control offers separate adjustment of the red, green and blue signal components. (The joystick is designed for butterflies, though, and the ham-fisted will find it oversensitive.) There's no memory or sequencer facility, and for this sort of money that is unacceptable.

BAUER-BOSCH VED-200, £379.00

What is the matter with these guys? A black box which does little more than alter colour, sharpness and contrast, plus a fade lever. I reckon you can get all that for less than 99 quid simply by reading through this article, so where does the £379 price tag come from? Bauer-Bosch indeed!

There is a state-of-the-art machine which is just zapping its way into the shops, but I ain't gonna review it! The **Panasonic WJ-MX10** (£1,200) has on-board genlock. This means you can mix images from any source (computer, TV, video disc, you name it) and then do almost whatever you like with the results. When we start getting into the four-figure bracket for add-ons, I reckon the whole field of camcorders is straying into pro-am use, and that, dear reader, is a very different can of worms.

NEXT MONTH: THE FUTURE IS NOW. In the Christmas edition (TGM002), I predicted the future of satellite television in the UK. I got the manufacturer and the price right (Amstrad, £199, check up if you don't believe me), I got the maverick mogul right (Rupert Murdoch), I even got the size of the dish right (600mm).

But there was one big cock-up in my crystal ball gazing: I got the date wrong. Cheap multi-channel satellite TV is not due in the next couple of years, it will be here in the next couple of months! Dates, channels, prices, programming, filth, smut, scandal, digitised pudenda all in your soaraway sizzling . . . er, um, more technophilia next month folks.

In the meantime there's filth, smut and scandal – well, at least the latest on satellite TV – in this month's TGM news section.

CONTACTS

MRVP (Video Titles 64), *Sandwich Road, Eastry CT13 0DP*

JESSOP (Vari Cushion), *Jessop House, Scudamore Road, Leicester LE3 1TZ*

CHERISHED VIDEOS (camcorder designer coats), *46 Moorfoot Ave, Chester-le-Street DH2 3A*

LONGREACH (Steady Ready Cam), *Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3DW*

AUDIO-TECHNICA ('Shotgun' mike), *Lockwood Close, Leeds LS11 5UU*
A.C.T. ELECTRONICS (VAF Mk3), *Unit 7, Blue Lantern Arcade, St Columb Major, Cornwall TR9 6RR*

All other products mentioned are available from your local video specialist or direct from the big boys.

CAPCOM COUNTDOWN

November 1987, London: US Gold's offspring GO!, only three-months-old, signs with Japanese coin-op producer Capcom. The licence deal costs GO! £1.2 million for ten of Capcom's latest arcade games. Seven months on, Capcom and GO! have three exciting new games zooming simultaneously toward arcades and home computers . . . Richard Eddy reports

When the Capcom deal was signed, a term in the contract stated Capcom would develop Commodore 64/128 conversions of their arcade games for the States and GO! could then produce any further conversions it wished. In fact, GO! imported the first two and we saw what the Americans came up with in *Side Arms* and *Gun Smoke* – and we were not very impressed; in fact GO! didn't release the Commodore *Gun Smoke* in the end.

David Baxter instituted a policy change when he joined GO! as Product Manager, enforcing their option to develop British conversions in parallel with Capcom's American games. The first to go this route was *Bionic Commando*, UK version written by Software Creations, who converted *Bubble Bobble*. 'I wanted it developed in the UK so I could keep track of programming progress,' explains David. 'I didn't want the risk of having the American version delivered only to find it of poor quality, I was much happier overseeing the production of *Bionic Commando* here.'



Baxter: taking no chances on quality

And as it turned out, the American version wasn't up to much, certainly not of a standard David was happy to release; Software Creations proved it could be done better and across all formats (see the ST review in this issue.)

But, as David points out, there's an intriguing twist to the tale: 'The *Street Fighter* [reviewed this issue] project was an interesting one. Over here we commissioned Tiertex [authors of *720°*] to convert it for the Commodore. Their brief was to make it as near as possible to the arcade machine – large sprites and scrolling backdrops – and they did.

'However, over in America a different attitude was taken – their version of *Street Fighter* looked more like *Yie Ar Kung Fu*, with static backdrops and smaller characters. The two versions are both good, but are practically different games – so we'll be releasing Commodore *Street Fighter* as a double A-side with both UK and US versions on one cassette.

The outcome of this experiment is that GO! now develops all UK conversions and then releases their Commodore 64/128, Atari ST and Amiga versions in the States. And this wraps in the three brand-new Capcom coin-ops – featured on these pages – to be released Christmas/Next Year, which should hit your home computer screens at the same time.

LED Storm

Capcom see *LED Storm* as their biggest ever game and their most exciting, but you will have to wait until Christmas to feed coins to it in the arcades. GO! plans a simultaneous computer release, so you can play *LED Storm* at home and when you're out.

What you get for your 10 pences is a mammoth driving-combat game across interstellar flyovers viewed from above. Like the other coin-ops coming up, Capcom have put heavy emphasis on the graphics, which are all bright, detailed and alien-like. Gameplay is a cross between *Spy Hunter* and *Buggy Boy*, as the player within the vehicle – which flips between being either car or motorbike – speeds along the sky-high roadwars blasting other drivers off the road.

There are several landscapes – I've seen six so far – scrolling vertically downward with two layers of parallax, one for the road and one for the landscape below. Each level has a different theme, with varying terrain and, of course, a lot of road hazards such as ramps, dips and no road at all.

LED Storm's conversion is going to be difficult – especially scrolling the detailed backdrops (on the ST it's going to be a real task) but GO! will give it a try.

Release date: December, formats: Spectrum, Commodore 64/128, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga



Forgotten Worlds

Take a flip! Capcom are scrolling horizontally in *Forgotten Worlds*, a two-player game spread over vicious alien terrain, the most impressive element of which is the fire power you can build up en route; at some points it becomes difficult to see exactly what's happening because of the bullets, lasers, bombs, et al flying around at a frightening speed.

It's going to be the most difficult conversion because of the action's speed, especially when combined with the intricate graphics which accompany every level. Software Creations are responsible and it's going to keep them occupied for a full six months; by contrast, *Bionic Commando* took three months.



Most of the major sprites, like the dragon, shouldn't be that difficult as they are single major sprites with three other elements appended and, happily, none moves at the same time.

Release date: 1989, formats: Commodore 64/128, Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga



THE HISTORY OF CAPCOM

Now with over 200 game development staff and projected sales last year of $71.4 million, Capcom had a shakier start. The company was founded in June 1983 by Kenzo Tsujimoto at a time when the arcade game industry was feeling the pinch of an acute downturn. From Capcom's headquarters in Osaka, Japan, Tsujimoto expanded to an American base in Sunnyvale, California. Like other coin-op producers, Capcom has had its critical ups and downs; here's the list of five year s of hard effort . . .



Tsujimoto: shaky start

COMMANDO
The famous vertically scrolling game which has been cloned time after time. Elite Systems produced competent conversions in 1985/6

SECTION Z
A shoot-'em-up which had little impact in the UK

GHOSTS AND GOBLINS
One of the all-time classic platform games with many levels – converted excellently – again by Elite Systems – and soon to be released on the Encore label

1942
An only-average vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up with doddering planes . . . the same applied to Elite Systems's conversions

SIDE ARMS
That two-player horizontally scrolling megablast. It's snaz in the arcades but not so hot on home computers. The Atari ST version is reviewed in this issue

BIONIC COMMANDO
Called *Bionic Commandos* in coin-op form, the recently converted action/platform game is probably Capcom's most original title

GUN SMOKE
Great fun in its coin-op format, but the GO! conversions were poor and the Commodore 64/128 wasn't even released

STREET FIGHTER
Should be in the shops now on home computers. *Street Fighter* is a playable beat-'em-up which packs a real punch

1943
The sequel, which improves greatly over its predecessor, will be released through GO! later this summer (now we await *1944*, *45* etc . . .

BLACK TIGER
A hack-'em-down through a multidirectional scrolling backdrop of fantasy worlds – currently undergoing conversion

TIGER ROAD
One of the biggest martial arts games ever. Playing Lee Wong you bash your way through many screens and defeat Ryu Ken Oh, a child kidnapper. The conversion will include five multiloads

And of course *LED Storm*, *Last Duel* and *Forgotten World*, featured here.



Last Duel

Grab your tricycle and head off into dangerous zones in space . . . Okay, so a tricycle may not sound the most awe-inspiring of vehicles to take you through a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up, but consider it impressively armed to the teeth with weaponry which can be added on while fighting and the fact that at a flick of a switch it can be transformed into a battle fighter, and you may be interested.

Last Duel, set for an early-1989 release in the arcades and on computer, is a typical Capcom game, almost a step back in trends so that it's simple to play but very addictive, and than making use of new technology to add stunning space graphics. It's a bit sick too; when you attack a large end-of-level-alien with the laser, instead of simply blasting it from whence it came the laser rips shreds from its slimy skin revealing its bowels beneath . . .

The computer versions are being written by Tiertex who say they can do a very good conversion within the machines' varying limitations – luckily for them, it's little more than a pretty vertical scroller, though once again certain elements of parallax scrolling may have to be scrapped. Tiertex like the Capcom coin-ops, deeming them playable, graphically superb and they are definitly excited about the conversion prospects.

Release date: January, formats: Commodore 64/128, Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Amiga



"When you attack a large end-of-level-alien, the laser rips shreds from its slimy skin revealing its bowels beneath"

Bionic Commandos: *Capcom's most original?*


10 CENTS
AUGUST
MERCY DASH
THE GIRL COMPUTER TROUBLE-SHOOTER IS IN DEADLY DANGER IN
THE SNOW WHITE JOB Part 1
THE OFFICES OF TGM...
...OH, BY THE WAY, OLI... IT'S HAPPENED AGAIN!
NOT...
YES... THE EDITOR'S LOST HIS ED!
THAT'S TERRIBLE!
I KNOW, BUT CROUCHER HAS A LOT ON HIS PLATE, SO WE ALL GET POOEY LINES THIS MONTH!
I MEAN ABOUT THE EDITOR... BUG A WRIT, THAT'S THE SIXTH ONE THIS YEAR!
SPACE WITH NOTHING IN IT OF THE YEAR.
AND WE'VE ONLY ONE LEFT FROM THAT SNOW WHITE AGENCY!
WE CAN'T RISK ANOTHER! LET'S GET IN AN UNDERCOVER AGENT TO POSE AS THE NEW ED! SOMEONE... YOU KNOW... EXPENDABLE!
So...
ABOUT TIME I GOT TRUSTED WITH A JOB WORTHY OF MY CAPABILITIES! COME ON, DAD! YOU CAN BE MY SECRETARY!
SNAUGHT
SNAUGHT
LATER
TAXI
HERE WE AM AT TGM! PAY THE MAN, DAD! GOSH, I'M GOING TO ENJOY THIS!
TWO AMBITIONS FULFILLED IN ONE SWELL FOOP!
GRUNT
THIS IS GREAT! NOT ONLY WILL I CATCH THE BADDIE, I'LL PUT THIS MAG BACK ON ITS FEET!
MERCY, LET'S NOT OVER-PLAY THE SLEUTH ASPECT... YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE UNDERCOVER!!
OH YEAH.. GOOD JOB, REALLY, THIS MEERSCHAUM IS STARTING TO PEN AND INK!
NON-MERCY FANS
SPEAKING OF INK, GET THE ART DEPARTMENT TO STOP PRINTING THAT BLUE HALF-TONE OVER MY PAGE!
MISS DASH! MISS DASH! PARCEL FOR YOU, MISS DASH!
THANK YOU, BOY, HERE'S A PENNY!
YOU'RE NEXT MERCY
BLEURGH! I'M STARTING TO SEE THE UGLY REALITIES OF LIFE NOW! TO THINK! THERE ARE POOR DEVILS OUT THERE WHO CAN'T AFFORD LETRASET!
MUST BE A WELCOMING PREZZIE!
GOSH, IT'S PAST OPENING TIME! I'LL WORK OUT THOSE CLUES AFTER A SWIFT QUAFF AT THE OLD R&T!
THESE MUST BE THE PIGS EARS I'VE HEARD MERCY IS ALWAYS MAKING! V. GOOD, TOO!
EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT
LARGE GIN ON THE HOUSE, MOLLY, FOR THE NEW TGM EDITOR. ACTUALLY, I'M AN UNDERCOVER AGENT TRYING TO SOLVE A MYSTERY... BUT IT'S SECRET!
WOW! OH-EVANS AND CROUCHER ARE LOOKING FOR YOU!
OOH. TOGETHER OR SEPERATELY?
SEPERATELY! EVANS SAID HE'LL CALL ROUND YOUR HOUSE LATER. MEL SAID HE'D TELEPHONE...
WELL IT BRINGS IN A BIT OF BEER MONEY INNIT.
GHURT GHURK GHURK WELL THIS WON'T GET THE BABY A NEW BONNET! I'D BETTER GET BACK TO THE OFFICE...
NO TELLING WHEN THAT CRITTER MAY TURN UP.
AH, I'M TOO KNACKERED TO WORK TODAY. I'M OFF HOME TO ME BED.
BAM BAM BAM
MERCY! IT'S ME! EVANS! I'VE GOT TO TALK!
YEAH, AND I BET THAT'S MEL PHONING! SEE ME TOMORROW! I'M GOING FOR SOME KIP!!
HEY! WHO'S THERE!
I TOLD YOU! IT'S ME! ROBIN!
NO! SOMEONE'S IN HERE!
WELL OPEN THE DOOR!
I CAN'T! IT'S GONE... THE ENTIRE BACKGROUND'S GONE!
THERE'S SOMEONE AT YOUR DRAWING BOARD! HE HAS A ROTRING ERASER!
KEEP COOL, MERCY! I'M GOING BACK OUT!
OH GOD, HE'S....
rotring
EEEK!
WHO IS TRYING TO HAVE MERCY RUBBED OUT? PART II NEXT MONTH



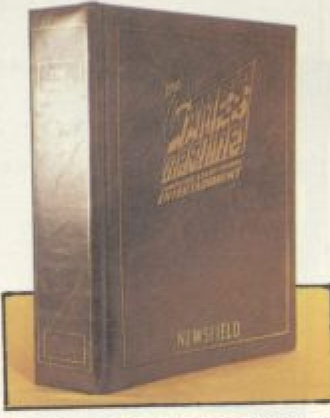
SHOPPING

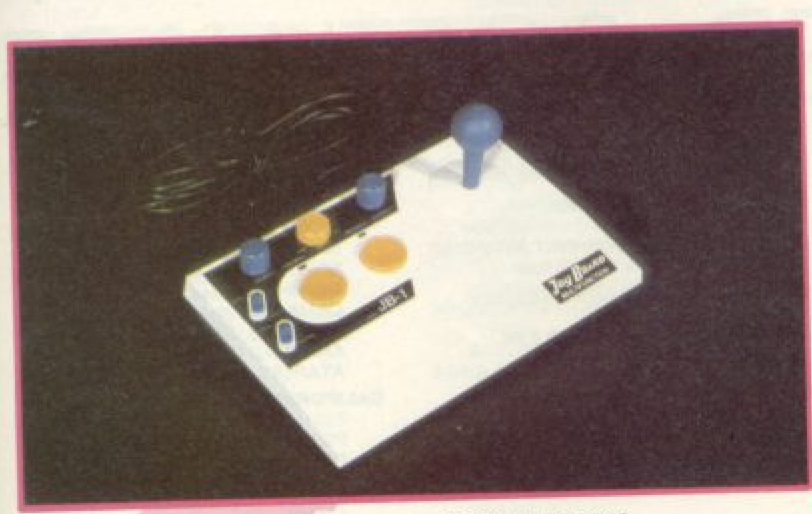
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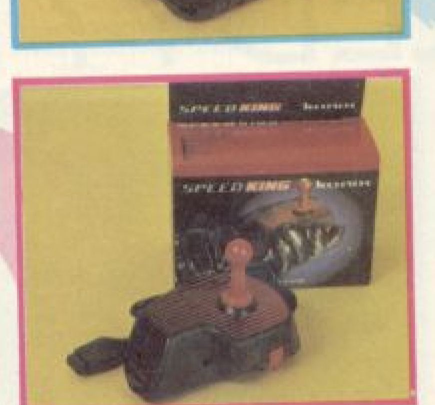
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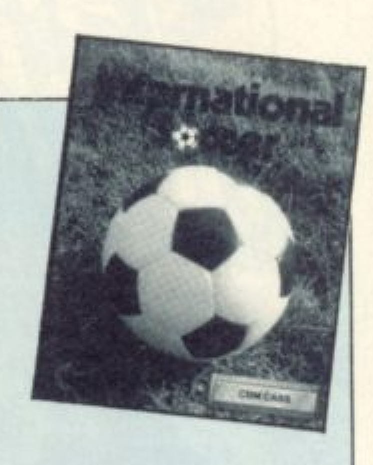
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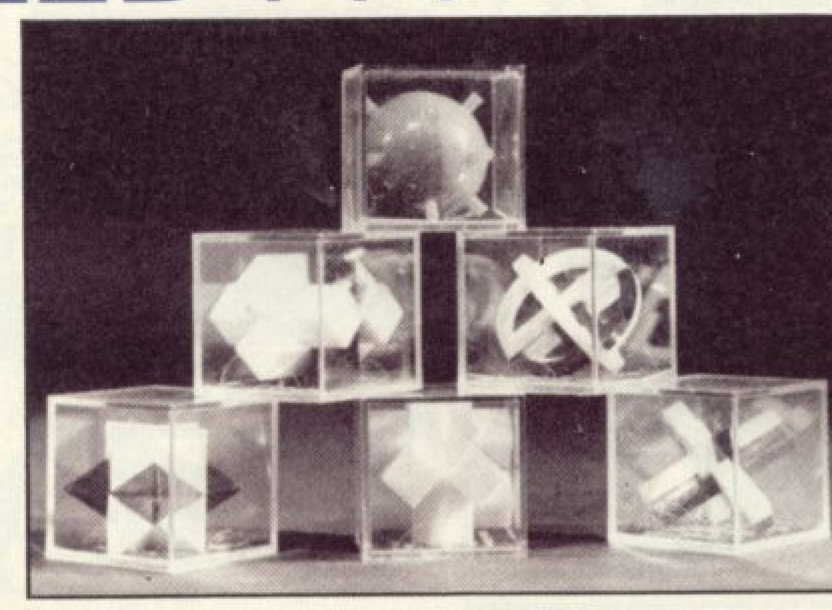
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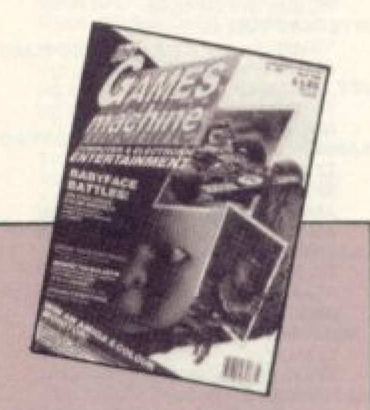
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TX:007 June 88

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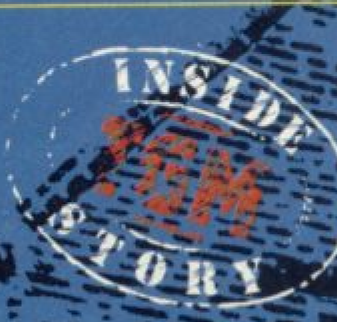
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THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE



From *Sunday Sport* to computer trade papers, Britain's press is blazing with lurid tales of 'haunted' computers. And serious psychical researchers suspect there's no smoke without fire. TGM has the facts in the cases of Messrs Dawson, Hughes and Webster.
Report by Barnaby Page

It all happened at once. In the space of ten days – late May, early June – Fleet Street caught on to the image of the 'ghost computer' (*News Of The World*), finding titillating tales in the apparent paradox of cold, contemporary high technology and spooky, cobwebby spirits from centuries past.

But for David Dawson it started in early 1984, when he took his family away from the cramped, dirty city to the idyll of rural Worcestershire, to a rambling great house in the village of Dunley, to a garden alive with lovingly tended clematis and camphire, to horses in the paddock beyond . . . and to Norman.

'The girls nicknamed it Norman,' recalls Dawson as he discusses the – well, he wisely won't speculate on what *it* could be, saying 'it's not causing any bother, we've accepted it and we've lived with it'.

Accepted and lived with the way that 'you can see something down the stairs out of the corner of your eye but when you look there's nothing there'. Accepted and lived with 'plants turned upside down in the night, electrical gadgets switched on when there's no-one there, cups in the kitchen which start rattling'. Got used to the family collie avoiding certain rooms ('she'd stand at the door and shiver').

So far, so clichéd – the sort of thing people should expect if they must buy gloomy country houses? Well, the Dawsons abruptly stopped taking Norman in their stride one day in November 1985.

An armful of a package arrived from the Dixons branch in Kidderminster, the local shopping town. It was Amstrad's latest high-street-sweeper, the PCW8256 or 'Joyce', then out just three months.

Dawson and his two children unwrapped it enthusiastically. 'We were playing about with it, installing the thing in the games room, installing *New Word 2*. We'd just about got the thing installed when mum called us for tea.'

They left the room. Now the computer was on its own.

'Then we heard the printer running, and that was it.'

It this time was unmistakable: no scurry past the corner of the eye, no warp that goes creak in the night in the wood of an old house. There was a neat printout from Norman, a printout which Dawson still has (and which TGM exclusively photographed for this report).

'I thought the kids had been playing around, but they couldn't have been . . . they were with me.'

And there was no file on the disk which could have been accidentally printed.

For months, the Amstrad continued to mystify the Dawsons, occasionally producing an archaic word in Gothic capitals onscreen – an effect which the combination of *New Word 2* software and PCW8256 hardware supposedly makes impossible.

It happened every three or four months. As they settled into The Red House, the family learned to think little of Norman – though now, of course, the Dawsons don't call *it* Norman, they call *it* Katheryne.

'Norman is a name that we dislike intensely.'

And according to the *Sunday Sport* newspaper's interpretation when they published Dawson's tale in a short article this last May, 'they nicknamed their ghost Norman – but the computer message put them straight'.

Dawson takes the newspaper's macabre embellishments in good humour – after all, it was he who contacted the soft-porn-and-shock tabloid in the first place, thinking he'd add his account to the 'series of inexplicables' *Sunday Sport* had been publishing.

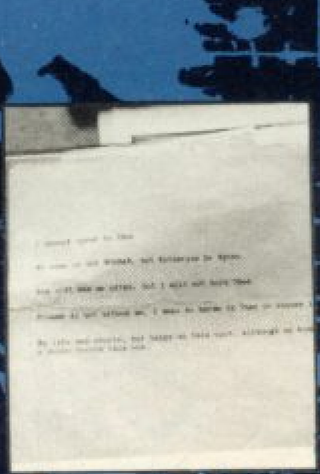
News Editor Howard Sounes had a reporter check Dawson out, and then the two journalists livened up the seven-paragraph filler with a grim twist, saying Katheryne had been burned at the stake ('a bit of artist's licence', says Dawson).

Another touch of colour in the story had some grounds, though. There really was a De Wyche family living near Dunley in Droitwich (but not on the site of the Dawsons' home as *Sunday Sport* suggested), and Richard De Wyche was a local landowner, according to Dawson.

He had once followed up these scraps of the local past, enlisting his children's history teacher in an effort to find up more about Katheryne De Wyche.

But apparently his interest wore thin. And he has now sent the Amstrad away to be used by a client of his accountancy consulting firm, he says. After all, he must reason, it is the place and not the computer which is affected by *it*: yet perhaps even a computer, a modern plastic object, can bring the unexplained upon itself. Certainly that is suggested by the murky facts in the case of a south Manchester architects' firm . . .


David Dawson: no accounting for mystery


Evidence: the text of the Dawsons' spontaneous printout reads as follows.
I cannot speak to Thee.
My name is not NORMAN, but Katheryne De Wyche
You will see me often, but I will not hurt thee.
Please do not offend me, I mean no harme to thee or anyone living.
My lyfe was shorte, but happy on this spot, although my home was a house before this one.

"She saw a yellow glow from the machine and this time it was actually unplugged at the wall"

'Spectral glowings'

It *stinks* of a stunt. Yet if any of what Database Publications claims about the case is true, the Amstrad PC1512 which came to inexplicable life one near-deserted night could give researchers their first 'haunted' computer.

The news came, again, through the tabloids: this time through the *Daily Mail* of May 26 1988, which Manfred Cassirer was reading as he took the train through London, a veteran member going about the ceaseless painstaking business of the Society For Psychical Research.

Reporter Gill Swain's tale of the unexplained in Stockport, south Manchester, had been given 16 paragraphs and a humorous slant. 'Things that go bump in the night mostly have a logical explanation,' it began. 'But how about an unplugged office computer which glows and 'groans' at typists?'

Then, down the bottom of the story, came the payoff: the computer and 'the video tape of its spectral glowings' would be on show at the Amstrad Computer Show in London's Alexandra Palace.

The show started that day, so when Cassirer arrived at the Muswell Hill home of his colleague Morris Grosses they made plans to visit the show – and the stand of *Personal Computing With The Amstrad* magazine.

The *Daily Mail* story had come from a press release sent out by the magazine in Macclesfield, Cheshire, which claimed it had been approached in January by the unnamed architects with a plea for help.

Features Editor Ken Hughes was well used to handling readers' problems and took the phone with a sense of déjà vu: 'I thought they had a problem running software'.

And they did, of a kind – well, they had a problem with hardware which ran when it was unplugged.

'The cleaner had heard the machine beeping and went to switch it off' – Hughes tells the story as the office staff told him. 'When she got there she found it switched off at the wall socket.

'A week later, she saw a yellow glow from the machine and this time it was actually unplugged at the wall.

'The cleaner was refusing to clean.'

So Hughes lugged the Amstrad to a little-used photo studio upstairs at the headquarters of Database Publications, unplugged it, and set a video camera running in front. That night he played the video back.

Nothing.

The next night, nothing.

For a month, nothing.

Then, at the beginning of March, *it all happened at once.* Says Hughes: 'There's a sequence on the video . . . you can see the mains lead quite clearly rolled up with the plug showing. The power light comes up and it goes through its boot-up. After five or six seconds or so its power goes off.'

The keyboard was disconnected, and Hughes had even removed the batteries used to keep the PC's clock and calendar running.

For two long months the camera continued its vigil, with Hughes fast-forwarding through one video tape each night while the computer sat silent, still, impassive as the other tape spooled slowly through.

And just as Hughes must have started to see wild geese dancing on the horizon, the image on his TV screen – inanimate, apparently motionless despite the rush of the fast-forwarding tape – suddenly kicked into life again.

'It happened about quarter to eleven at night . . . You could see characters flashing across the screen randomly. This time there was no power light.'

The flickering letters came and went too quickly to be read, but (unlike the words on David Dawson's screen) 'they appeared to be' ordinary characters.

Now the Amstrad Computer Show was approaching, and Hughes saw the opportunity for a press release. It was all fine hype for the showpiece of Database's stand: the 'spooky machine' (*News Of The World*) as centrepiece, the video as illustration.

It was there, in the shouting and bustle of a busy show, that Cassirer saw the tape – which at the end of June he was still trying to get from Hughes, who had promised to send it.

And there's the rub. Hughes says 'I'm looking for a scientific explanation . . . the bit about I'm going to call in an exorcist [in the *News Of The World*] is totally untrue'.

Yet without the tape and without access to the architects, researchers are stymied. Cassirer, speaking amid his collection of Egyptian art and obscure books on spiritualism and clairvoyance, says: 'I'd very much like to interview the charlady [in confidence]. It's a very interesting tape. There's no explanation for it, supposing the facts are as reported.'

Supposing the facts are as reported . . . for Cassirer, Grosses and their 800-odd fellow members at the London-based Society For Psychical Research, the facts and even the people in the much earlier case of Ken Webster and John Bucknall are tantalisingly elusive.

Disappearance

Ken Webster was a teacher in Stockport, south Manchester – again – who contacted the society three or four years ago (even the date eludes memory). John Stiles, its Research Liaison Officer, remembers that 'he reported these peculiar messages coming through his word processor.'

"You could see characters flashing across the screen randomly. This time there was no power light"

Cassirer takes up the story: 'What Ken Webster claims is that his computer delivers messages from a 16th-century don [academic] of Brasenose College, Oxford.'

Webster's girlfriend Debbie was herself a member of the society – but 'the implication is that Debbie is sort of the medium of the case'. So the society's long-time administrator Eleanor O'Keeffe assigned the investigation to a local member with computer knowledge . . . one John Bucknall, then working in artificial intelligence at Barda Systems in Liverpool.

For a while, nothing was heard. Then Bucknall gave Stiles a verbal report, and 'his view was that there was nothing paranormal about it', says Stiles. 'He apparently conducted a number of tests, but what these were we don't know.'

Then Bucknall disappeared. His membership of the society lapsed. His old flat in Sefton Park, Liverpool, was let out to a student. He left no forwarding address; the post is still piling up. Friends describe him loosely as 'working all over the country'. All TGM's efforts to trace Barda Systems have failed.

And the society's first case involving computers came to naught. But 'Ken Webster doesn't seem like the kind of person who would play a hoax', insists Cassirer. 'Hoaxers are few and far between. Inconclusive cases are the great majority. Obviously you don't want to say it was a spirit or a little man from Mars unless you want to look ridiculous.'

Analysis

To be cynical is a necessary part of examining these stories: and there are inconsistencies in Dawson's tale as well as Ken Hughes' press-released story.

When we first spoke to Dawson he said the computer was an Amstrad PCW8512 – but the PCW8512 didn't go to market till March 1986. He spoke of a double disk drive, but the PCW8256 is a single-drive machine (a second drive is an add-on, which wouldn't have come in the package from Dixons).

"Ken Webster claims his computer delivers messages from a 16th-century don of Brasenose College"

There are convenient inconsistencies, too, of the kind which stifle attempts at corroboration.

The lady who lived in The Red House before Dawson has died, he says. So has the local teacher whose help he enlisted to track down the historical Katheryne De Wyche, apparently – though none of the staff at The Chantry Secondary School in Martley, Hereford And Worcester, where the Dawson children study, could identify such a teacher.

And when we visited Dawson he said the computer itself is now in Evesham, Hereford And Worcester, with a client of his firm, DR Management Services – though he originally told us the family still had the computer.

Finally, slight scepticism arises from Dawson's report that 'occasionally it will throw up a word in Old English capitals': text was never written or printed in continuous Old English capitals, simply because it's UNREADABLE.

Dawson himself advances no theory to explain the incidents – he's a businessman, not a researcher, after all – but offers the sensible argument that 'if you're a spectre trying to make yourself felt, you'd choose the most direct route . . . not that I'm a spectre'.

Apart from getting his name in *Sunday Sport*, David Dawson would have had nothing to gain from concocting the tale; in the case of Database Publications, however, its newsworthy discoveries came conveniently close to a major show. (Cassirer: 'I always find it a bit suspicious if they're too publicity-conscious.')

Ken Hughes's video tape would be as fakeable as Dawson's printout, and – most significantly of all – Cassirer disputes that the computer's plug can be seen on the tape. In any case, it would be possible to fold one power lead neatly beside the machine while running another, hidden, to the wall . . .

Moreover, Hughes is cagy about giving too much away; naturally enough, perhaps, because TGM is published by a rival firm. And as Cassirer says, 'generally people who have had experiences which they think are paranormal are rather cagy': hence the architects' request for anonymity?

But he advances a theory of induced power: the architects' firm (which now has a new, well-behaved Amstrad) is near the perimeter controls of Manchester Airport, and American scientists have already produced equipment that will power a portable computer by picking up radio waves. Yet could this power a cathode-ray tube display, which uses more energy than a portable's LCD?

TGM contacted all the architects we could locate near Manchester Airport, and all seemed cheerily bemused by our strange enquiry – save Halliday Meecham Architects Ltd of Styal, Wilmslow, which has steadfastly refused to reply to our approaches by phone and letter. Who knows what evil lurks on the Altrincham Road?

Indeed, what is there to know? The Society For Psychical Research and its mainstays like Cassirer (also a council member at the British UFO Research Organisation) have toiled for more than a century at investigating spontaneous phenomena – that is, anything that's not a controlled experiment. And healthy scepticism is a tool of their trade.

As Stiles puts it, 'there are so many things that can play up with electronics . . . you've got to be very careful involving anything paranormal. It's frequently a claim, but it's very difficult to rule out normal causes.'

Yet Cassirer recalls innumerable inexplicable cases of the traditional haunted house going electronic – 'switching on and off is very common'. And he draws a parallel with the sudden rash of reports of unexplained materialisations in the Victorian era.

'There are sort of fashions for these things . . . I've no idea why.'


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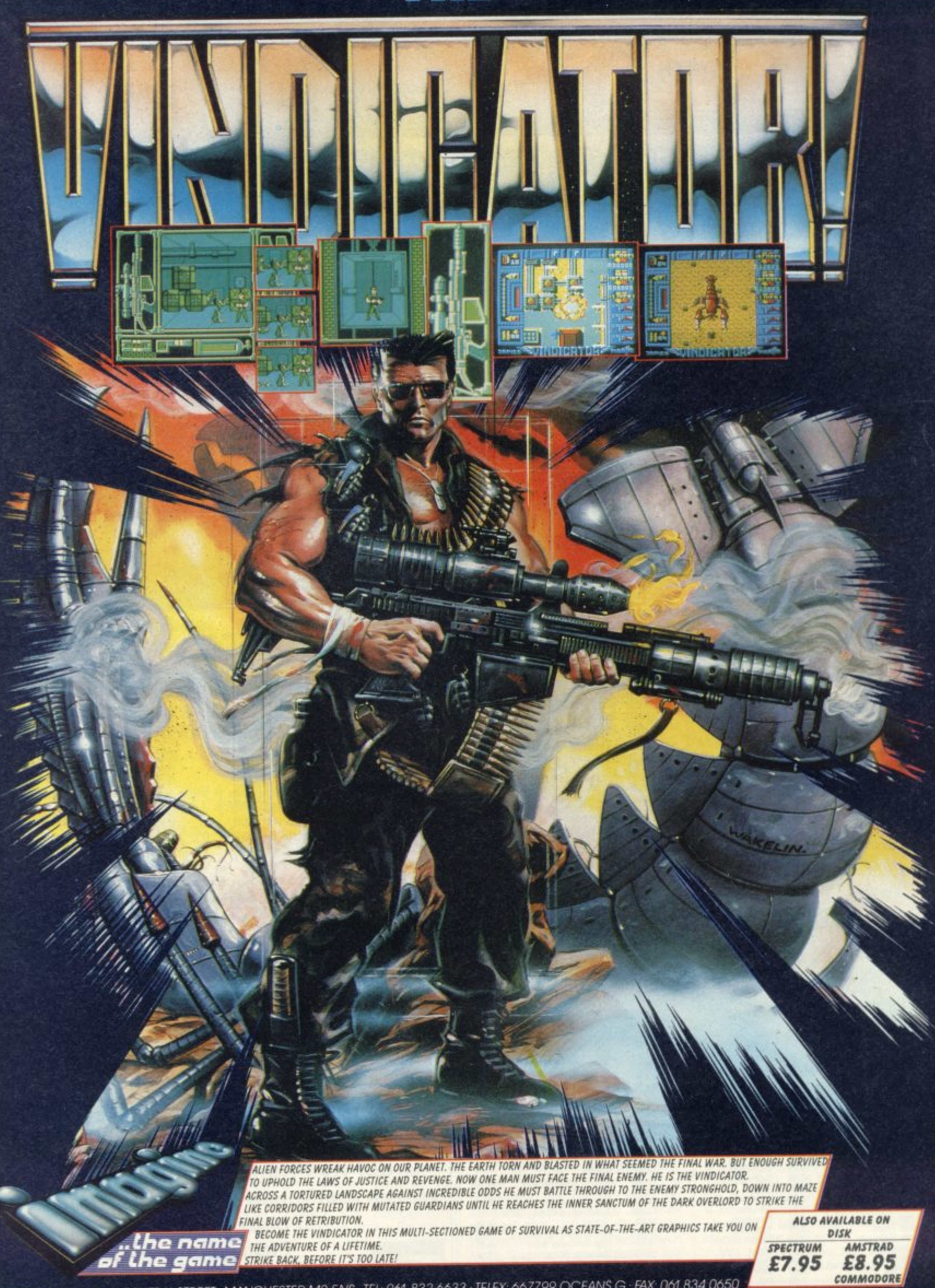
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THE NATIONAL COMPUTER GAMES CHAMPIONSHIPS PROGRESS REPORT

The first National Computer Games Championship ever to be held in Britain is well under way. Contestants struggling to reach the exciting finals at this year's Personal Computer Show at Earls Court. THE GAMES MACHINE reports from the first qualifying rounds

As we go to press, the third qualifying round (Midlands), held in Birmingham, is taking place, while 20 successful semi-finalists from the Scotland and Wales/ South-West heats, already held, sit back and relax their wrists, ready to renew battle on August 16 and 18.

First, then, we travel to that silvery-grey city, often referred to as 'the Athens of the North', in the company of TGM's Robin Hogg and CRASH's Mark Caswell.

EDINBURGH

Saturday June 11

The start of the National Computer Games Championship began in earnest at the first venue, in Edinburgh, capital city of Scotland and probably one of the most attractive cities in Britain.

On the way North on Friday June 10, the Newsfield cavalcade stopped off to admire the view from the top of a hill (small mountain is a more apt description) before driving into Edinburgh, getting lost and then miraculously finding our destination – Fet Lore Boys Club, part of the National Association of Boys Clubs, our hosts for the championship.

By evening everything was set up and ready to go, whereupon our thoughts turned to the next day's conflict.

Saturday morning, and they came out of nowhere; they came from all regions of Scotland, hungry to commence battle on the Spectrum and Commodore.



A tense moment for two young Scottish contestants

Each of the contestants was given ten minutes practice to improve on their finely-honed skills, before the competition began. The game at this Scottish qualifying heat was US Gold's *720°*, played on both machines, and the rules of battle were simple: one game only with ten minutes in which to play. No second chance. Could the contestants stand the pressure, keep their nerve and win through? Whatever the results were going to be, we knew the competition would be fierce.

Spectrum gamesters began, skateboards moving at breathtaking speeds and some truly incredible, near fatal, stunts were performed to get those vital points. All the while the time was ticking away, pushing contestants into taking ever more risks.



Darren Lowe, Edinburgh Commodore winner, outposes TGM's Robin Hogg

The pace hotted up as **Stephen Smithwhite** took up the challenge and promptly set the score to beat of over 138,000. Could it be beaten? The answer looked like 'yes' as **Stuart Campbell** and **Brian Wardlaw** took up the challenge, the battle raging on between both players as they passed the 100,000 mark with moderate ease. But sadly for them both, Stephen's score proved too high to reach, the last few grains of sand in the digital hourglass ran out, leaving Stuart on just under 110,000 and Brian close behind with over 103,000. Formidable scores nevertheless.

Over on the Commodore tables, the conflict proved just as deadly. High scores being achieved right from the word go! **Neil White** and **Mark Young** pulled out all the stops in a very close, almost dead-heat – Neil eventually drew ahead to 69,600, Mark finishing just 2,400 points behind. With the next two contestants, a clear winner emerged as **Darren Lowe** competed against **Jonathan Lowe**. Eight minutes passed and Darren topped 70,000; by nine minutes Darren looked unstoppable, and went on to finish with 89,200. And that clinched it, the remaining contestants put up a brave fight but Darren's score remained tops and he was declared the winner.

We congratulated the winners and other semi-finalists, and

PRESS ANY KEY

commiserated the losers. In the end, though, all went away with prizes for their valiant service.

Qualifiers for the semi-finals to be held in Manchester

Commodore 64

Darren Lowe (winner)	**89,200**
Neil White	**69,600**
Mark Young	**67,200**
Jonathan Lowe	**62,000**
Mark Gallagher	**52,300**

Spectrum

Stephen Smithwhite (winner)	138,660
Stuart Campbell	109,310
Brian Wardlaw	103,250
Mark Smithwhite	84,270
William Bann	53,500



Five Spectrum semi-finalists at Edinburgh



CRASH's Mark caswell congratulates Stephen Smithwhite, Edinburgh Spectrum winner

fighter. You either had the knack or you didn't, these two guys certainly did – no others came close.

On the Commodore front many felt *The Great Giana Sisters* was going to be a doddle – 'just like *Super Mario Bros*'. But all too soon they realised that it was *not* going to be so easy! The top two scorers came from Swindon, home of the railway workshops. **Stuart Witts** notched up a creditable 9,555, whilst the only person to get over the 10,000 barrier was **Adrian Harvey** with 10370.



As the contestants wandered off into distance, prizes in hand, a small voice was heard to say: 'How the hell am I going to explain all these blown fuses to US Gold?' . . .

Qualifiers for the semi-finals to be held in London

Spectrum – *Street Fighter*

Michael Deer (winner)	232,480
Mark Sevill	230740
Philip White	168410
Justin Pearson	157210
Paul Burridge	152300

Commodore – *The Great Giana Sisters*

Adrian Harvey (winnder)	**10370**
Stuart Witts	**9555**
Robert Bains	**5785**
Robert Moore	**5785**
Tom Miles	**4805**

NAILSWORTH

Saturday June 18

A week later, and the action moved south, the ajudication this time in the competent hands of CRASH's Dominic Handy and ZZAP!'s Paul Glancey.



CRASH editor Dominic Handy congratulates Nailsworth Spectrum winner, Michael Deer

In the quiet countryside of sleepy Gloucestershire lies Nailsworth. Few would know, but many would soon realise, that this was the centre of conflict for the South-West and Wales round of the National Computer Games Championship. They came from far a wide, joysticks in hand, not wanting to miss their chance of fame and fortune. Many had already camped outside the eerie surroundings of the Nailsworth Boys Club before the doors had even opened.

The contestants looked confident (little did they know of the considerable challenge the organisers had in plugging in all eight computers – with accompanying monitors etc – into a handful of sockets.) As the games – *Street Fighter* (Spectrum), *The Great Giana Sisters* (Commodore 64), both unreleased – were unveiled, some squirmed in corners, while others wanted to know of any changes from other versions.

All the way from Swansea came **Michael Deer**, a timid fellow in construction, who placed his gifted frame in front of the Spectrum +3. Others had six or seven practice games, but he needed only one (which he didn't even finish.) As the ten-minute battle commenced, the two contestants aside young Deer fell by the wayside (not even lasting the time limit), but Michael continued to the end, clocking up a magnificent 232,480 points, compared to the 30,000 of his fellow contestants.

It was not over, though. Up stepped a very confident looking **Mark Sevill** from Newent, scoring 230,740; not bad for a virgin



Nail-biting action at Nailsworth with The Great Giana Sisters

TOWARD THE SEMI-FINALS AND FINALS . . .

With just three more qualifying rounds to go as we write (Birmingham July 2, London July 9 and Leeds July 16), arrangements are well in hand for the semi-finals.

The first will be held on Tuesday August 16, inside the main terminal area at Manchester Airport. There had been problems setting up the Northern Ireland qualifying round, which was to be held on the Larne-Stranraer Sea-Link ferry. Worries about potential disruption should the National Union of Seamen's strike spread, were made groundless when the ferry ship in question was suddenly dry-docked for repairs! However, the National Association of Boys Clubs has arranged for the Northern Ireland contestants to be flown straight to Manchester Airport to compete directly in the semi-finals.

The second will be held in London on Thursday August 18, on the concourse of Waterloo Station, thanks to the cooperation of British Rail and Network SouthEast. The old station has undergone an astonishing change and is now regarded as one of the finest railway stations in Europe. Network Southeast is responsible for planning and marketing of all British Rail suburban services on those routes radiating from London which serve the South of England.

A massive investment programme costing £160 million will continue the work already started to improve the environment at every point in the Network, including the building of three entirely new stations. For comuters, the distinctive red-blue-grey-banded trains are already providing a brighter and more reliable service than ever before, most of them feeding into the Network's completely rebuilt flagship – Waterloo. It will make a fittingly hi-tech backdrop to the battle for Earls Court.

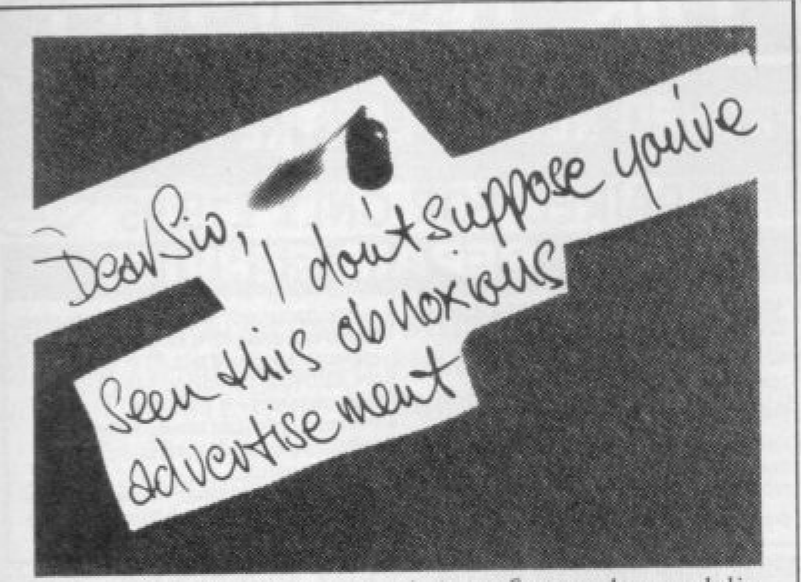
It won't only be the semi-finalists competing in Manchester and London, there will be an additional celebrity challenge match at each venue between two well-known personalities, the winners also to compete in turn at their own PC Show finals.

After the semi-finals, we will be left with 12 finalists (three per machine per venue.) They will all enjoy an expenses-paid weekend in London, attending the Earls Court Personal Computer Show, September 16-18, competing for two prizes of £1,000 worth of hardware/software through US Gold and Centresoft.

The battle will be perfectly visible to the public through a massive, multiscreen video wall sponsored by Pepsi Cola. And when, at the end of the day, the names of the two champions are known – one Spectrum, one Commodore – both will fight it out for overall games player champion status on an Atari ST game in the Pepsi Cola Challenge.

But all this is in the future. Next month we will get up to date with the remaining qualifying rounds. TGM11 goes on sale the day before the Personal Computer Show opens to the public, and in that issue you will find details of who is taking part in the finals.

The National Computer Games Championship is sponsored by US Gold in association with the National Association of Boys Clubs and the Personal Computer Show and organised by Newsfield Limited, publishers of CRASH, ZZAP!64 and THE GAMES MACHINE. We gratefully acknowledge the kind assistance of British Rail, the British Airports Authority, Dixons for supplying the Spectrum +3s and monitors, Commodore (UK) for supplying the Commodore 128s and monitors, and Konix for the joysticks. And thanks to the staff and members of the local Boys Clubs for all their help and patience!



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READERPAGE

''Unless the software houses wise up quickly, their gross profiteering is going to kill the 16-bit industry in this country . . . '' writes T WHITE from Nottinghamshire, in a plea not to see 16-bit games go the way of the original, expensive console product. His letter earns £40 of software from READERPAGE.

AN UNFAIR PRICE

Dear TGM,
Ask any ardent 8-bit owners why he won't upgrade to a 16-bit machine and they will invariably tell you that the prices of games on these machines are far too high. As an Atari ST owner I can't argue with that line of logic, after all it's absolutely true.

When I bought my machine some 14 months ago I did so on the assumption that software prices would plummet once STs became mass market machines. Now that there are 120,000 ST owners in this country alone, it is well past the time when software prices should have fallen. But they haven't, instead we are now faced with a concerted effort by the software houses to extract massive profits by keeping prices in the £20 – £25 range.

Indeed, some software houses have even increased their prices over the past year (Elite, Ocean and Tynesoft are the three names which spring immediately to mind) which is hardly an encouraging sign for us owners.

True, there are some games retailing for £10, but these so-called budget games consist mainly of old converted 8-bit titles which sell on the said machines for £1.99. Thus £10 can hardly be termed either budget-priced or a bargain.

Unless the software houses wise up quickly, their gross profiteering is going to kill the 16-bit industry in this country. Cast your minds back to when games consoles first arrived. They sold reasonably well, but were soon abandoned because owners couldn't afford to keep paying the high prices for the software. A similar fate now looms on the horizon for the Amiga and the ST unless software houses see fit to dramatically reduce prices.
T White, Nottinghamshire

The software price argument has gone on as long as software has been around. However, TGM will put its Statistical Deployment Department (UK div., subsection Dbase) to work and come up with some figures since September last. Meanwhile, your letter of the month prize should pay for a couple of games . . .

KEEP LESSER BITS

Dear TGM,
I'm replying to Nigel Roust (TGM**006**) and Agustin Malave (TGM**008**). They want TGM to turn into a 16-bit only magazine. I reckon this is stupid. To turn TGM into a 16-bit mag, would mean cutting down reviews, a loss of adverts for 8-bit games and omission of all the miscellaneous technology features. This would leave the magazine very thin indeed. To increase the thickness, articles on ST and Amiga hardware would have to be brought in, leaving TGM as just another 16-bit mag like *ST User* and *Amiga World* etc.

Now you compare the circulation figures for a 16-bit specific mag and TGM. Big difference, huh? There isn't the market for a 16-bit games mag at the moment. Perhaps there will be in a couple of years but not now.

TGM is dedicated to electronic entertainment. Not many people buy Amiga's or STs just to play games and a 16-bit games-only mag would not have a large enough market to survive.

Anyway, I don't know what all the complaining is about. The majority of TGM is dedicated to 16-bit anyway and by featuring other systems, TGM has a guaranteed readership which will soon be challenging *C&VG*. So stop whingeing, ST and Amiga owners. You've never had it so good. When you're playing *Xenon* and *Carrier Command*, spare a thought for us humble Spectrum 128 owners. We're the ones who have things to complain about, yet we don't moan constantly (and at least we don't have to fork out £25 for a game).

While I was reading the letters in TGM**008** and getting greener and greener with envy at people saying 'my Amiga's only got 4,096 colours', I seethed upon reading Gary W Daley's letter; a Sega, CBM 64, Spectrum *and* Nintendo! Talk about overindulgence! If he has money to throw around, he can lob some in my direction! What's even worse is that he blames you for the lack of Nintendo games. What does he want Newsfield to do, make a take-over bid for Nintendo? Perhaps he should have researched the console better before shelling out £100.

Just to tie up, would it be possible to lengthen Readerpage, put game tips in Information Desk and have reviewers' names on the reviews? This would make a much better reviewing system though there isn't much wrong with it at the moment.

And lastly, a big thank you from this Spectrum 128 owner for stating if games have Spectrum 128 music or not. I think CRASH should take a leaf out of your book.
Jonathan Williams, Gloucestershire

On launching TGM, our brief was to follow the market, not invent it, which explains why we do review 8-bit product. The more people move toward 16-bit, or even 32-bit, the less TGM will deal with 8-bit. Makes sense! Readerpage is still the same number of pages, but it will no doubt increase in time. As you can see, Information Desk is now incorporating some tips – so's Rob Steel in his adventure column. But reviewers' names are still an unpopular notion around here – we think of ourselves as a reviewing team, and sometimes as many as five people's opinions go into a single review.

SHINY COVERS

Dear TGM,
I wish to say to Agustin Malave from Spain (TGM**008**) that although he has a 16-bit computer, it does not mean that everyone has a 16-bit computer. There may be other magazines available but it does not mean that they are going to change the magazine just for you! (I hope!!).

My next point is to do with the publication dates. Why oh why are they always wrong? For example if you say that TGM comes out on July 20, it usually means it's coming out two days after that. So why not have a fixed date like the last Tuesday of every month or something like that? It may make a lot of people less confused.

Third and last point is to do with your printer. Just how many have you got, how many pages can it print, and how do you make the front cover so smooth and shiny?
Steven Payne, London

First point agreed with! Second: we always give the publication date accurately (except once when the schedule went back a week), and it's always a Thursday, middle of the month (some months have five Thursdays). Newsagents aren't supposed to put a magazine on sale before that date, but some do, and some get their magazines a few days late. About that there is nothing we can do!

TGM is printed by Carlisle Web Offset, up north in Carlisle, Cumbria, although the covers are done by another printer Carlisle contracts out to. They make the cover so shiny by spraying a spirit varnish on immediately the ink is dry, and then drying the varnish under ultra-violet lights.

AFTERBURNER AGAIN

Dear TGM,
I write to back up a claim by Kenneth Jackson (TGM**006**) that you are slightly unfair in your reviews for the SEGA.

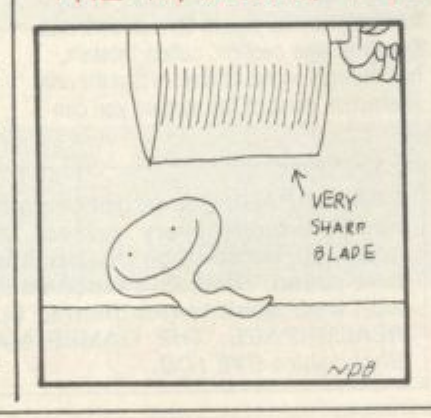
A few weeks ago I went out to buy *Afterburner*, not too sure about spending £25 on a game you had told me had no runways or continue features. This is where I suggest you switch on your Sega, get ready to follow some instructions and be surprised.

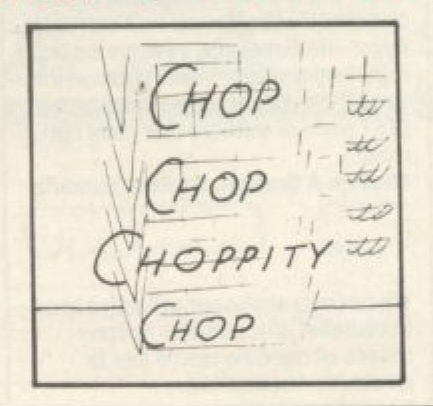
1. Fly to the end of Stage 6 and destroy the mega-baddy, with missiles not guns, your plane will then automatically land on a runway.
2. If, before Stage 10 you manage to lose your first three lives, try pushing your directional controller up and press both fire buttons at the same time, when GAME OVER appears, (if you find a way to use it after Stage 10 please let me know) you will then continue but the score starts from zero.

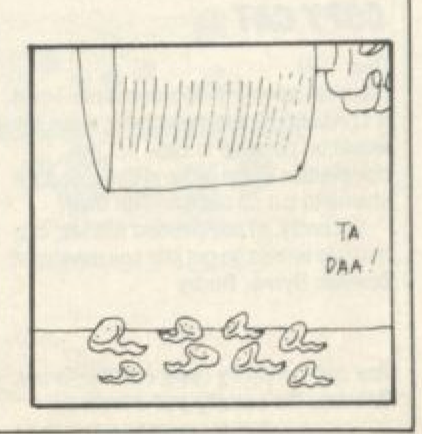
Now, I suggest you rewrite the review of *Afterburner* pronto, or I will summon a crack team of F-14 Thundex cats, four Space Harriers and a few of the OutRunners from the nearest available arcade to flatten your nice little offices into the ground!
Chris Cole, Plymouth, Devon.

The problem is not so much being unfair to Sega, as it is those handling

THE AMAZING MULTIPLYING CUTEY-POO







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Sega PR being fair to us. We repeat, that the copy we reviewed did not have runways or a continue-play feature. The surprise was such that calls were made to establish whether or not the copy was complete. We were told it was . . . (eloquent shrugs).

PLAYING A ROLE

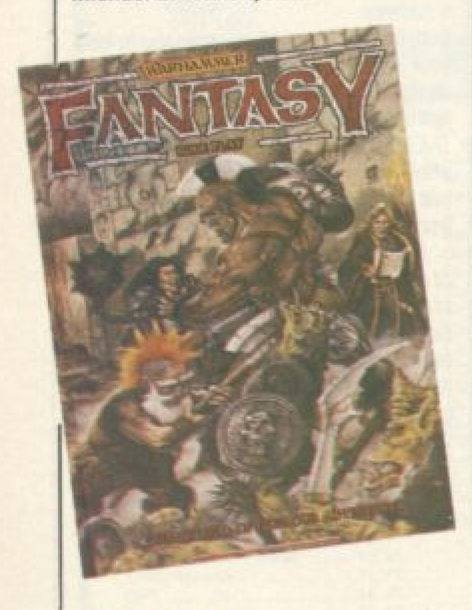
Dear TGM,
With regard to John Woods's review of *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, in TGM**002**, first he mentioned the characters advancement scheme being too unrealistic, the fact that you get experience points and spend them on skills or characters changing jobs. But a good GM would not let them do this straight away. He would make the characters find a suitable teacher to teach them the skills. This makes it more realistic.

Second he said: 'The combat system, too, is simplistic, with characters being either dead or alive'. Has he not discovered the critical hits table where the blow may not do serious damage, and gradually works up to totally destroying the opponent, doing varying degrees of damage?

I agree with his description of *The Enemy Within* and *Shadows Over Bogenhagen* in terms of gameplay, but these supplements have a large amount of background on the Empire, especially the first one, which makes them worth having.

He also says it is suitable for uncomplicated scenarios. I advise him to refer to *A Rough Night At The Three Feathers* in *White Dwarf* magazine, Issue 94. In fact the adventures can be as complicated as the GM feels necessary.

I would recommend *WHFRP* to anyone – and I don't work for Games Workshop.
Michael Cracknell, Kent

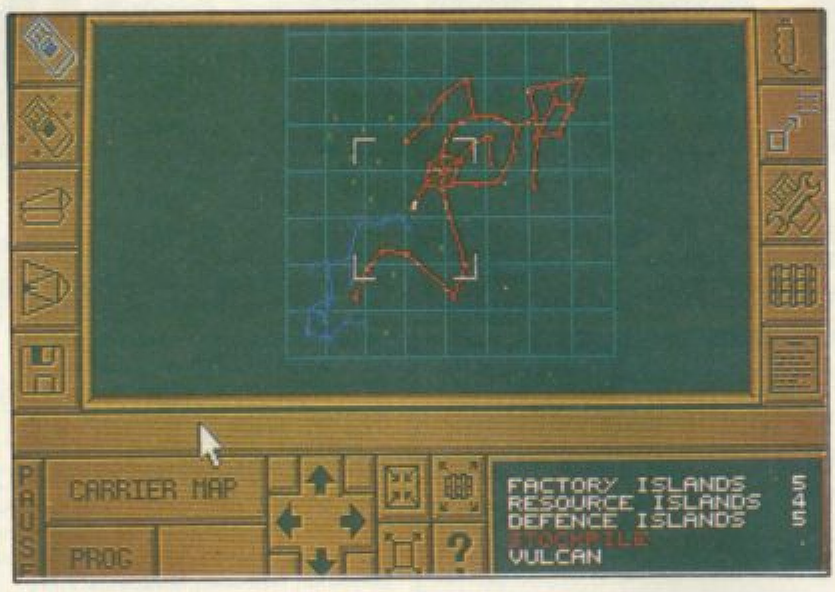


COPY CAT

Dear TGM,
I've been buying TGM since Issue 1 and it's brilliant. Which is why I wondered if it would be possible to copy out the competition forms by hand because it's a shame to cut up such an Ace mag?

Secondly, in competition entries, can multiple entries be put into one envelope?
Damian Byrne, Derby

You can certainly copy out the forms, Damian. We usually put a form in because you wouldn't believe how many people forget to add their names and addresses otherwise! For forms (like wordsquares, a photocopy will do as well. Multiple entries are no problem either, but mark your envelope on top with MULTIPLE ENTRIES, otherwise they won't get sorted in time.



FAST REVERSE

Dear TGM,
Okay! I knew all along that Realtime would deliver the goods and *Carrier Command* indeed puts all other simulations to shame – even better than *Flight Simulator II* and *Universal Simulator* combined.

A feature on just how they can create hit after hit would go down well, I think, especially with more 3-D fast, filled-graphic simulations on the horizon.

However while playing *Carrier Command*, I noticed a few features that puzzled me:

Your explanation on how to attack the enemy carrier may work, but during play I found that waiting near Terminus did just as well, however, onto the questions:

After a high altitude attack on the enemy carrier (which seemed to do absolutely nothing, even with at least seven missiles blasting into it), I found I was running out of fuel. In sheer Kamikazi bravado I flew my lone fighter right at the conning tower of the ACC Omega, or at least I tried to, instead I bounced off – I just couldn't believe it, no matter what I did I just bounced off, not only that but the carrier then set sail in retreat at a speed of roughly 600 mph, even my Manta couldn't catch it. Why fog awds ache (as Mel would write it!)?

However, the sight of an aircraft carrier whirling round my viewscreen, accompanied by a flypast of Marauder fighters against the background of clear skies and blue seas is one I will not readily forget – Realtime in my view, are the best in the business and Firebird chose well in using them. Full marks all round to the BEST piece of software ever (until next month).
Stephen A Graham, Carlisle, Cumbria

We can only shake our collective head in disbelief. But perhaps Andrew Onions of realtime would like to comment – sometime . . .

PRESTEL HARD TIMES

Dear TGM,
I write on behalf of a large minority of Prestel/Micronet users; can you shine a little light on the goings on within the system.

For the past couple of months since the 'NEW' Micronet arrived there has been little to prove the change was for the better. Updates are thin on the ground for the Amiga and ST which have had the worst coverage you could ever believe, to tell the truth, it has been appalling. We have had maybe 6 or 7 reviews and the letters page is still inoperative, which is what it has been from the launch of the new Micronet. You may think 'but there are more things than reviews and letters sections, surely', well you would be wrong, there is NOTHING whatsoever. Apart from the Solely Sixty Four Amiga section run by a separate part of Prestel/Micronet, there's absolutely nothing.

Most of the best sections are run by separate Information Providers, not Micronet. Okay, so users need to contribute, which I myself have done, but we should not need to do it all. That's what we pay our subscriptions for. The above is not only just true for the Amiga/ST section. There has been a lack of updates in other sections, but not nearly as severe.

Another downfall of the system has been the all-too-often service interruptions. These include: Chatline failures (sometimes every night), Mailbox going down regularly and severe speed problems. The speed problems are the worst; on the nights it happens you could send a Chatline message or a normal Mailbox message and it would not appear until about two hours later, on some occasions.

Micronet has also taken away the free service that used to be called Swap-Shop where you could place adverts for other users to read and replaced it with a section called Bazaar. You have to pay from 20p to 40p to use this section. Also the other new section, called Teletalk, has charges on top as well. In fact the only interactive parts of the system you can use without getting charged are the letters and certain chatlines.

And the charges are about to get worse: a few days ago an Information Provider called Keith Bulmer was barred from the system for leaking information about the new charges to be introduced shortly. When we users of the system heard about these new charges we decided that we had had enough. We thought it was about time to tell prospective new users of the system what they are letting themselves in for.

I shall now proceed to list them.

At the moment the charges for Prestel (Domestic Users) is £6.50 per quarter, this will rise to £8.50. Not only this, but they are going to take away the free off-peak access and replace it with a 1p per minute charge. All other times will be put up a penny to 7p per minute. This will be a major blow to the younger users of the system who have to wait until off-peak time to use the system. The new charges will mean that with the cost of the call included, an hour's use will cost on average £2. The action most users will be taking when the charges come into force is to terminate their accounts. This is not my view alone, this is the view of the users.
Richard Clafton, Osmondthorpe, Leeds.

THE GAMES MACHINE would be interested to hear the views of other Prestel/Micronet users about the service and the new charges.

MSX COVERAGE

Dear TGM,
I pleased by your coverage of MSX Computers. But there is one thing you don't seem to be sure of: MSX-I and MSX-II. Whenever you mention an MSX game you class it as MSX-II. The majority of MSX owners in this country own MSX-I computers, and virtually all games released are for MSX-I (which are compatible with MSX-II computers).

Another point: you never review MSX cassette software. Why? The majority of games released for MSX are on cassette. Why haven't you had a version update of *Terramex*? It *has* been released. In fact lots of cassette games have been released in the last few weeks but you don't seem to know they even exist. For example the long-awaited *Elite* (Firebird), Hunt For Red October (Grandslam), *Indiana Jones*, *Gunsmoke* (US Gold) and *Eye* from Endurance to name but a few.
JC Halsted, Chester, Cheshire

It's very strange, but rather like the Sega games situation, British software houses seem almost unkeen to promote their MSX software. We keep asking for it (and we are aware it's around), but it never arrives. A blitz for next month, then . . .

READERPAGE is your opportunity to let us know what you think about virtually every subject under the sun! Space is at a premium, so don't be disappointed if you don't get printed first time round. The editor reserves the right alter letters in keeping with their spirit to get them to fit, or to use only parts. Write to READERPAGE, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*

INFORMATION DESK

The letters come thick and fast to this month's INFORMATION DESK, Robin Hogg provides dazzling answers to your many questions

First off is ANDREW KYPRI of Melbourne, Australia who asks about Amiga conversions.

- Are *Gunship* from Microprose, *Gauntlet*, *Gauntlet II* or *Out Run* from US Gold coming out for the Amiga? If so when will they be available?

Conversion work has yet to be started on the three US Gold titles – they're unlikely to appear before to release products for all major September. US Gold generally aims markets simultaneously – when you see the TGM version updates you should be able to buy them soon after. Microprose, by contrast, does not distribute in Australia, although you may buy from them direct, or obtain the game from the TGM mail order section. However, don't order *Gunship* until you see our update, probably sometime next year.

Closer to home, DANIEL SMITH wants to know about transatlantic Amiga problems . . .

- Can you put American software on to an English Amiga without having to translate the game to PAL format? I want to know this because American TV is different from English TV.

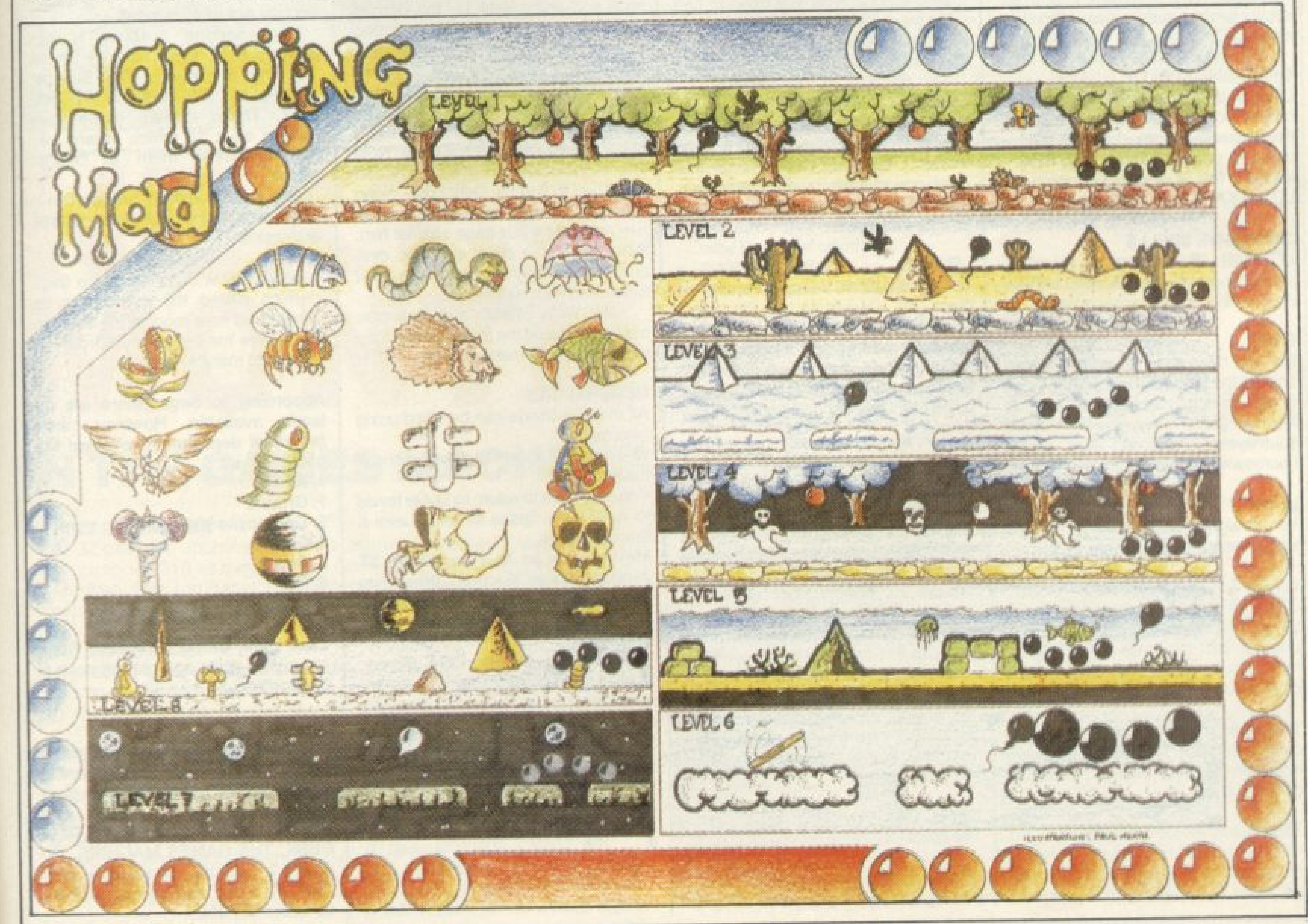
Imported American games will in fact run on an Amiga and British TV set-up, but only at the cost of a two centimetre black band at the bottom of the screen. This problem does not affect Amiga owners lucky enough to have a monitor.

Speaking of which, JUSTIN MOY, of Crawley, W Sussex asks . . .

- Can you connect an Amiga to a 1901 monitor?

Yes you can, but not easily. The Amiga and 1901 monitors are of different polarities, therefore, although a picture can be produced on the monitor, it will roll. Probably the best solution – if your monitor is

Keep those balls bouncing with this map for the Spectrum and Amstrad versions of Elite's Hopping Mad



PRESS ANY KEY

out of guarantee – is to get Trilogic to open it up and add some special circuitry. This allows the monitor to be used with both Amiga and CBM 64. According to Graham Kelly of Trilogic, the 1901 gives a surprisingly good picture, almost up to the quality of a Philips.

The price of the conversion is £30, and a special next-day delivery service is available for £12 each way. The company's address is Trilogic, *Unit 1, 253B New Works Road, Low Moor, Bradford BD12 0QP* ☎ (0274) 691115. Alternatively special polarity-reversing leads priced £14 can be purchased from Trilogic. This gives just 16 colours however and is only really suitable for word processing.

A seasoned adventurer, TONY OLDBRIDGE, Goole, Humberside, writes next, with tips on his quest in FTL's excellent *Dungeon Master*.

HELPFUL SPELLS
LO YA – increases stamina. LO VI – increases health. LO ZO VEN – poison, used by throwing. LO VI BRO – antidote to all poisons. LO YA BRO – magical forcefield. LO YA BRO DAIN – increases wisdom. LO YA BRO NETA – increases vitality. LO OH BRO ROS – increases dexterity. LO FUL BRO KU – increases strength. LO ZO BRO RA – pure mana. LO FUL – magical light. LO ZO – antimatter spell that can open some doors. LO OH EW RA – magical sight. LO OH EW SAR – hides you from monsters. LO OH IR RA – makes room lighter. LO DES IR SAR – makes room darker. LO ZO KATH RA – frees power gem. (NB Caster must have a hand free and once dropped the gem cannot be retrieved.)

OFFENSIVE SPELLS
LO FUL IR – fireball. LO DES VEN – bolt of poison. LO DES EW – harms non-material beings. LO OH VEN – cloud of poison. LO YA BRE ROS – leaves a trail of poisonous footprints. LO OH KATH RA – lightning bolt.

DEFENSIVE SPELLS
LO YAR IR – magical forcefield (protects party). LO FUL BRO NETA – magical fire shield (protects party).

LEVEL 1
For the best starting team possible choose the following characters: Tiggy (most starting mana for a wizard), Mprhus (journeyman priest), Stamm (journeyman fighter) and Halk (journeyman fighter).

LEVEL 2
Very straightforward, just find the keys to the doors.

LEVEL 3
Chamber of the Guardian – You have to get the chest. Keep pressing the buttons until it comes out. Use the mirror on the gem on the other wall to open a secret room.

The vault: To open door across pit cast LO ZO spell. To cross pit throw an object on the pressure pad behind the door.

The matrix: Follow passage until you reach entrance. Before you there's a never ending passage. Turn right and go down next passage on your left. Continue down passage until it ends then turn left. In the second alcove on your right there's a button – press it. Carry on left and a secret alcove will have opened with a key in it.

Time is of the essence: Drop all the objects you don't need. Then it's a case of pressing buttons and getting by the traps before they catch you. Get the key at the end.
Room of the gem: Place an object on the pressure plate to keep the pit closed. To kill the monsters in here get them to chase you back to the pit and when they stand on it reopen it. Get gem and key.

Creature cavern: This one is fun! Bash the monsters and get key.

LEVEL 4
Another straightforward level. Find key.

LEVEL 5
In the room with the pit just walk around until the pits open allowing you to get through the exits. In the forcefield room, when you step out, go right, then back, forward, left, right and back – you will now be at the exit.

LEVEL 6
In the riddle room you need a bow, mirror of dawn, blue gem and gold coin. The slot in one of the rooms is also for a gold coin. There are four keys to collect on this level.

LEVEL 7
By now you should have a RA key. Use it on the door. Now you need to find three more plus a ruby and master key on the later levels. One RA key is on this level.

LEVEL 8
Use LO DES EW to kill the ghosts. Also have a fire bomb or spell ready to blast thieves. There are two keys on this level, one of them on the arena floor. DON'T PANIC! – things are not as bad as they first seem.

LEVEL 9
To open the riddle door; lighter than air place the Carbamite. In the room where the wall fires fireballs, go to first pressure pad, place object on it, backstep one and sidestep fireball. Now you can stand on the pad without being fried. Repeat until you reach the far end.

LEVEL 10
When you come out here go forward then turn left. Go forward once more, then around the last block and forward until you get to the last exit on your left. Take it then go south once more. Go around the bottom block again and through the left exit. You are in a room with two doors. In between them is a key. Use it to open the right door. Step on the pad ZOOM and make a step off to the right of the forcefield. Pick up the objects and step back on to the pads. Every so often a passageway appears, timing is needed here to make an exit.

LEVEL 11
The clockwise room – if you go around a corner and turn back you are in a different place. Poison trap – when you pick up the sword just stand still until the poison cloud disperses. Turn around and walk forward one step at a time releasing the poison traps harmlessly, and wait for them to clear.

LEVEL 12
When you emerge from the passageway turn left. Get the objects though the door. Enter the large hall. The passageway across the hall by the other door leads to a network of passages. The monsters that can turn invisible are really tough. They only attack when they're whole however, you can hit them then. When they are non-material you can use LO DES EW or the vorpal blades. When you've been into all the passageways return to the room where you first emerged. In that room there are invisible pits, only faintly outlined on the floor. To close them again stand on the plate. Go to the other passage and explore all the rooms. One has a button that opens the door in the big hall. The best way to kill the Knights is to get them to follow you into the invisible pit room, close the pit and when they stand over them open the pits again. Kill them all as one has a key you need.

LEVELS 13 & 14
Level 13 is simple if done correctly. First use the vorpal blades to kill the 'Fire Pit' monsters. Then go down the northern passage and round the corner. The monsters do not follow you but stand at the exit. Now you can use magic safely as every time they cast a spell at you, you can dodge around the corner. When all are dead climb down one of the pits using the rope and enter level 14, the Dragon Level! Don't worry – he may be strong and powerful but he's as thick as a doorknob. Use all your magical boxes but one on him. Circle him and keep attacking until he dies. Then use the ZO KATH RA spell to free the Gem and place the Firestaff on the Gem. Now you're one powerful fighting force. Go up a level to find the Dark Lord. When you see him use the magical box on him and cast a flux cage against him. Whirl round the other side and cast another as it only does one side, now fuse it and he's history.

Note: Both Stamm and Halk can cast spells using the firestaff once they become journeyman wizards.

GENERAL TIPS
All material things can be killed using swords.
When you kill something always check the remains.
You may have to return to upper levels to refill water flasks as after Level 5 there are none.

Moving now on to a tip for the ST version of *Ikari Warriors*: When you get a high score, type in FREERIDE to become an immortal Ikari Warrior.

Continuing in the Elite theme, thanks must go to the very lovely JILL BIRCH for the *Hopping Mad* map, the game which has been driving us up the wall with its bubblegum tune and four bouncing balls.

B MOFFAT of Glenrothes, Fife is wondering about . . .

■ . . . the joystick adaptors used in games such as *Leatherneck* and *Gauntlet II* that allow for up to four-player action. Do we need to buy a different adaptor for different games?

You'll be pleased to hear, Mr Moffat, that you won't have to go out and buy another adaptor each time. The one adaptor (priced at £6) is reuseable with any game which has the four-player option and the necessary software routines to utilise the adaptor. Microdeal informs us, however, that Amiga and ST adaptors are different in design and could, if plugged into the wrong machine, cause damage.

Back up North again for two questions from S OVERY of Dumbarton in Scotland.

■ Does the latest breed of Commodore 64/128 have a new sound chip? I'm interested because my new 64 sounds quieter – toned down. And could you tell me where I might buy *Lords Of Midnight* and *Doomdark's Revenge* for the 64, or alternatively the *Best Of Beyond* compilation – now that Beyond is no more?

Commodore haven't changed the SID chip in the Commodore 64 – there's no reason to, as it's one of the best around. SID chips do have very minor differences in their filters from machine to machine (unique quirks in effect.) As for the problem with quieter sounds it's probably your TV that's muffling the sound chip signal or the TV channel used for computer screen display is slightly out of alignment.

Your second problem is not Beyond help, you could try Byrite, *19, The Broadway, The Bourne, Southgate, N16 6PH* ☎ (01) 882 4942. These classic games are getting on a bit which means you can purchase them at budget prices.

The final question belongs to K FITZPATRICK, from Kirkby in Liverpool, who asks:

■ Do you know of a lead for the Sega which allows the console to be linked up to a monitor? If not, can you give me the pin-outs from the Sega to make a lead.

According to Sega, there are no leads available. However, their technical department revealed the pin layout as:
1. Audio
2. Ground
3. Composite Video
4. 5 Volts
5. Green
6. Red
7. Compo site Sync
8. Blue
Take care, though, because Sega pin layout goes against the normal convention.

If you have any queries concerning computers and Electronic Entertainment or would like to pass on your hints, tips, maps and POKES, write to INFORMATION DESK, THE GAMES MACHINE, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB*. You can also computer MBX us with I-D TGM.

UNCLE MEL'S TRIVIA QUIZ

Before he dashed off to research background plots for *Aliens IV*, *Star Wars IV* (Part One) and *Back To The Future Again*, Mel remembered to knock off another original quiz to test your reflexes and prove again that you are a Person Renowned in Computer Knowledge (17 out of 20 will do nicely.)

1) What does the acronym RISC stand for?

2) What does the acronym HAM stand for in computer graphics?

3) What games are lurking in this filth? 'NO CLAP BOT-AID', 'IRA DONKA', 'YER DIC NOB'

4) Who said: 'The true object of all human life is play', **a)** GK Chesterton, **b)** Samantha Fox, **c)** Jesus Christ

5) As a percentage of total UK sales, what is the predicted software revenue for 16-bit games by Christmas 1988, plus or minus 5%?

6) Name the castaway in *Lost In Space*

7) Which is the odd one out, Joy Stick, Dot Matrix, Anna Daptor, Virgin Games

8) In which countries do the following magazines exist: *Happy Computer*, *Ordinateur 2000*, *Sinclair User*?

9) Name The Fantastic Four superheroes of Marvel Comics.

10) True or false? This photo shows the Oliver Twins shrunken to microscopic size and living in armpit hair.



11) Who took *Video Killed The Radio Star* to Number One in 1979?

12) In the first three months of this year, what was the biggest selling microcomputer in Britain?

13) How do you make Cutie Pooh?

14) What have the following got in common: Einstein, Archimedes, Esther Rantzen

15) What have the following SF authors got in common: Paul Chapin, Rod Keen, Bunny Maunders, Jonathan Swift III, Leo Queequeg, Dr JH Watson

16) What is the difference between a 3½" and a dongle?

17) In the first episode of *Star Trek*, what was the Captain's name, and who played him?

18) Which black athlete featured on the original cover of Code Masters' *The Race Against Time*, and who has replaced him?

19) Where is silicon most commonly found?

20) True or false, the heroine featured on Ocean's *Where Time Stood Still* has constipation, a shovel-shaped tail and ET stuck on her chest.

ANSWERS

1) Reduced Instruction Set Computing
2) Hold And Modify (or a real pig of a program)
3) 'Captain Blood', 'Arkanoid', 'Cybernoid'
4) GK Chesterton (1908)
5) 31%
6) The Robinson family (John, Maureen, Will, Judy and Penny), Don West, Dr Zachary Smith and the Robot
7) Dot Matrix, but I can't reveal why
8) Germany, France, Amnesia
9) Mr Fantastic, The Human Torch, Invisible Girl and The Thing
10) False. The hair is of the pubic ilk.
11) Buggles
12) Amstrad PCW (151,884 units, or 31% of the entire volume sold)
13) Eat lots of Cutie, of course.
14) A clip-on megabyte
15) They are all the same person, Philip José Farmer
16) One is known as 'a floppy', the other may be quite firm
17) Captain Pike, played by Jeff Hunter
18) Jessie Owens, replaced by Carl Lewis
19) Silicon is commonly found in sand and Californian women
20) Would I risk a law suit if it wasn't true? Look fer yerself!

NEXT MONTH

IN THE GAMES MACHINE!

- **THIS IS THE BBC**
  All 32 bits of it! Journey with the TGM team into the bowels of an Archimedes 310 as they explore *Conqueror*, *Missile Control* and *Medusa*. And Jon Bates reveals some secrets about its musical capacity
- **PC SHOWCASE**
  Newsfield Exclusive! A detailed guide to the 1988 Personal Computer Show at Earls Court, London (September 16-18). All the glitter, excitement, people, stands, celebrities and events.
- **CANDY FROM A BBC**
  Robin Candy takes an in-depth look at *GFA Artist*, one of the few available graphics utilities for the Archimedes
- **PARSEC PIXEL+**
  Amid embarrassed shuffling of feet we quietly promise, heads bowed, that this incredible utility *will* appear in time to be included in at least one issue of TGM . . . next month maybe
- **COMPUTER FRAUD**
  Money stolen by the techno-thief will, this year, exceed cash robberies from banks, cars, houses and muggings put together. Mel Croucher investigates computerised fraud and exposes a new breed of criminal
- **CYBERPUNK**
  Stuart Wynne concludes his mini-series by having a quiet read
- **THE TELEREVOLUTION**
  TV will be set alight by the satellite boom. Mel Croucher risks square eyes to report

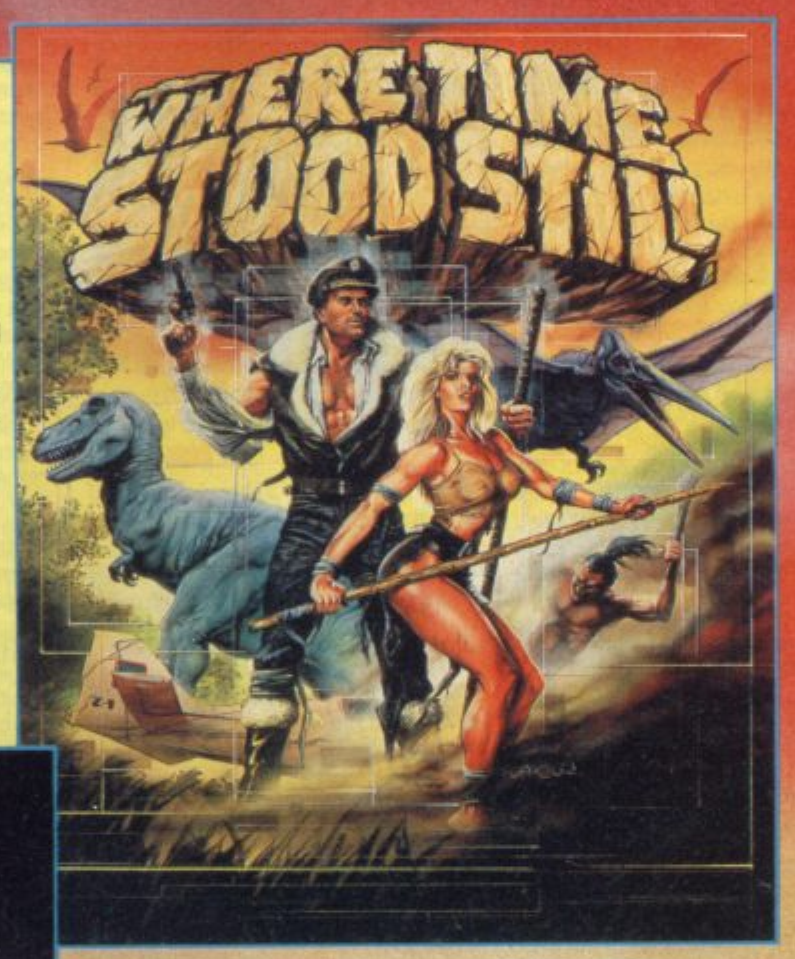
PLUS THE GAMES MACHINE's incomparable look at the very latest in reviews – previews, boardgames, roleplay, adventures, play by mail, competitions, techno-gadgets, graphics, (breath here) not to mention Jon Bates and his personal listen-to-music software for the Archimedes.
Eureka! TGM**010** displaces air on your newsagent's shelves from August 18

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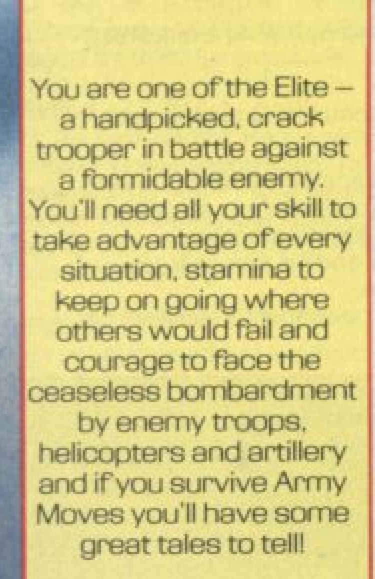
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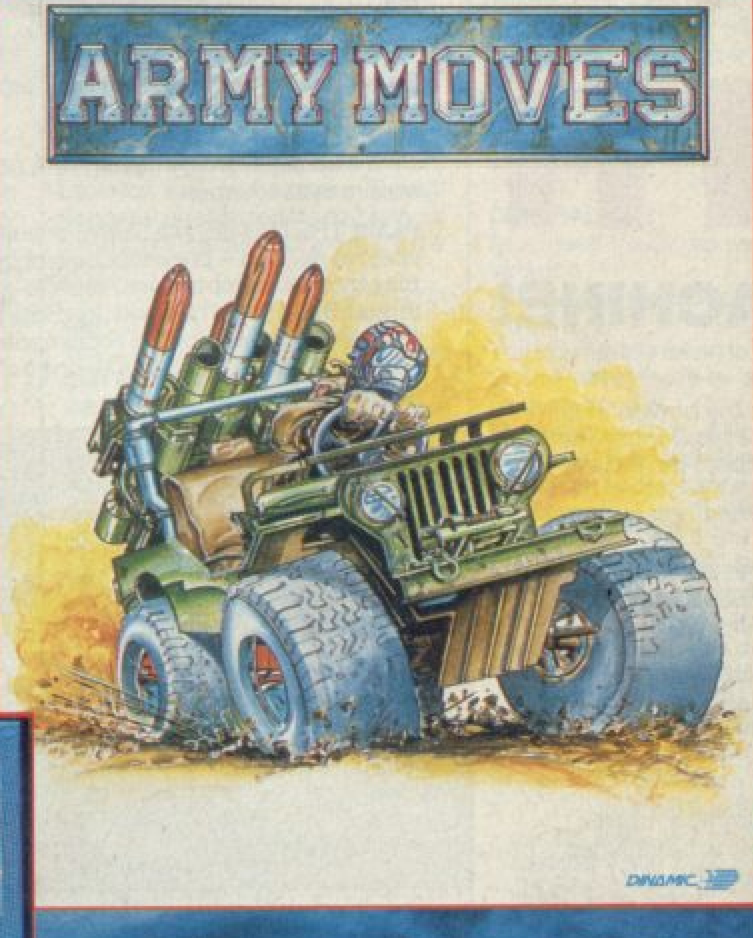


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